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## **CATARACT BLINDNESS NO MORE**

### **VISTA Launches Campaign to Fight against Cataract as #1 Cause of Blindness in Malaysia**

**Petaling Jaya, 24 September 2014** - The fight against cataract as the leading cause of blindness in Malaysia begins today as **VISTA Eye Specialist (VISTA)**, together with supporting partners and participating universities launched the **NO MORE CATARACT BLINDNESS** campaign in conjunction with World Sight Day 2014.

Kicking-off the initiative at Dialogue in the Dark (DID) Malaysia, were **Mr Lim Boon Siong, Founder & CEO of VISTA; Dr Aloysius Low, Chief Consultant Ophthalmologist, Cataract and Refractive Surgeon;** as well as campaign partners, **Mr Stevens Chan Kum Fai, CEO & Founder of Dialogue in the Dark Malaysia (DID);** and **SS Patricia, Managing Director of Pat-Lin Communications.**

Challenging traditional roles by encouraging the able-sighted on an experiential journey on what it is like to live in darkness, guests were guided by blind guides through specially constructed dark rooms at DID, in which characteristics of daily environments were conveyed to understand how it is to live without sight; an experience that serves as a reminder to never take sight for granted, and to ensure regular eye screening.

Also present were student representatives from the three participating universities - **HELP University, Management & Science University (MSU)** and **SEGi University** to support the fight against cataract; a demonstration of **VISTA's** role in mentoring young Malaysians and driving civic consciousness on cataract and its impact on people's lives.

"In line with the Vision 2020 Global Declaration plan and **VISTA's** aim to bring people's vision from 'blur to clear', the **No More Cataract Blindness** campaign is an important and necessary initiative in eliminating cataract as the **#1** cause of blindness in Malaysia. Through the



campaign, we are striving to not only increase public awareness on cataract and its treatment, but also encourage active participation from various parties in the fight against cataract, particularly from young Malaysians such as our student representatives here," stated **Boon Siong** at the launch.

**VISTA** will be allocating resources and RM100,000 for the **No More Cataract Blindness** campaign in planning and executing this Community Project alongside its various partners, to help drive public awareness on cataract blindness. The campaign not only provides students the opportunity to play their part in eliminating preventable cataract blindness, but to also experience a real-life Community Project where they would glean valuable transferrable skills such as event organisation, coordination and budget management, to name a few - an experience not easily gained in classrooms and lecture halls alone.

Among others, the project requires the student teams to organise or participate in an in-house University Eye Awareness Carnival, several external Eye Roadshows or Seminars, as well as to initiate a fund-raising activity for a pre-determined charity organisation. The team with the most effective and successful project will be conferred the **VISTA Cataract Fighter** award, with a trophy, cash prize, along with a certificate of achievement.

"We are honoured to be given the opportunity to participate in the **No More Cataract Blindness** campaign, where we can work together with our partners to fight against cataract which can impact the quality of our lives. We believe that with increased public awareness about the condition and its treatment options, even more Malaysians will be able to enjoy all that life has to offer through good and healthy vision. It is our aspiration that this initiative will act as a viable springboard to drive lasting and sustainable results in eliminating cataract as the leading cause of blindness in Malaysia," said **Patricia**.

As part of **VISTA's** Corporate Responsibility (CR) programme, the **No More Cataract Blindness** campaign will offer public screenings for cataract and other eye diseases at its family carnival at various **VISTA** Eye Specialist Centres. During this time, a mini DID will be set-up at its Centre at The Curve where patrons can undergo the experiential session with blind guides.



The launch was also highlighted by the screening of 'Are You Blind', a short film produced by Jason Lim Productions and supported by VISTA. It powerfully reflects the various challenges a visually impaired person can face in Malaysia, emphasising the need for increased empathy and public awareness of the condition.

Cataract is responsible for 39% of all cases of visual impairments in Malaysia, making it the leading cause of blindness among Malaysians<sup>1</sup>.

"The fact that people are still experiencing loss of vision because of cataract is totally unnecessary, especially considering that cataract blindness is preventable. This shows a great need for increased awareness of what it is, how it can impact people's lives and the treatment options available. People need to know the importance of regular eye screenings and early cataract surgery to minimise complication and ensure healthy vision," **Dr Aloysius** said.

He continued to explain that modern cataract surgery is one of the safest procedures and thanks to the many technological advancements and innovations over the years.

Speaking on living with blindness and the concept behind the production of 'Are You Blind', **Stevens** shared, "Losing the ability to see is extremely daunting. Speaking from experience, it is a huge challenge to learn to adapt to the new environment, to train the other senses to become sharper to make up for the loss of vision. It also impacts the mental and emotional aspects, diminishing the individual's capacity to enjoy life to the fullest. This is why DID was initiated - to help the Sighted understand what it is like to lose one of the most important senses, and to prevent what happened to me from happening to others. The **No More Cataract Blindness** campaign is an excellent platform where we can continue our work, and together with VISTA, we can help eradicate preventable blindness, and help those affected by cataract to get a new lease of life."

VISTA's family carnival and screenings will be held at its Eye Specialist Centres at The Curve, Klang and AmpWalk at Ampang from 10 to 12 October 2014; and at One City @ USJ25, Bangsar and Johor from 17 to 19 October 2014. University students will also be participating in the

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<sup>1</sup> Going blind unnecessarily - <http://www.thestar.com.my/Lifestyle/Health/2011/10/23/Going-blind-unnecessarily/>



carnival through their respective Community Projects as part of the campaign's student engagement component.

The **No More Cataract Blindness** student Community Project will run over the course of five months, culminating in an Award Ceremony to be held in January 2015.

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Issued on behalf of **VISTA EYE SPECIALIST** by **PAT-LIN COMMUNICATIONS SDN. BHD.** For further information, please contact Usha Veerasamy at 03-7660 0400 ext. 521 or 012-3210260 / Arun Ramany at 03-7660 0400 ext. 519 or 012-354 0023 / or email [ushav@patlin.com.my](mailto:ushav@patlin.com.my) or [arun@patlin.com.my](mailto:arun@patlin.com.my)

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### About VISTA Eye Specialist (VISTA)

VISTA is one of the leading providers of eye care since its establishment in 1999. Based on years of experience in this field, VISTA understands the urgency to address and promote the prevention of blindness. Therefore, VISTA strongly advocates early detection through yearly comprehensive eye screening.

In line with VISTA's tagline - 'from blur to clear', VISTA is committed to improving their patients' quality of life through quality vision care, thereby employing modern technology and clinical practices to provide safer vision correction procedure with the best possible results.

VISTA offers screening, treatment and consultative services pertaining to eyes. It includes general eye care & vision evaluation, Glaucoma screening & treatment, diabetic eye disease evaluation & screening and the list goes on. VISTA also offers vision correction procedures such as correction of Short-sightedness & Astigmatism, Reading Vision and Cataract Surgery.