

A photograph of a man with dark, spiky hair, wearing a red long-sleeved shirt, smiling broadly and eating something from his hand. In the background, a woman with dark hair and a red headband is visible, looking down. The setting appears to be a warehouse or a food processing area, with cardboard boxes and shelves in the background.

# *This Is Home, Truly*

**KAMAS BIN MOHD**

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**PHOTOS BY MACTULA LENZ**

Coming home to a bed, a warm meal or a proper shower is something everyone takes for granted. For three long years, Kamas Mohd did not have any of these as he stayed at void decks. He talks about his extraordinary story of finally finding his way and a home.

Looking at Kamas Mohd, 45, you cannot tell that he has had quite a hard life. He is friendly, chatty and has many friends. Even though he is confined to a wheelchair, he looks fit and moves around easily.

Four years ago though, he was a different man: a man who had fallen out with his family, who couldn't hold on to a steady job and, worse of

all, who couldn't find a place to live. Paralysed from waist down because of a tragic work accident when he was in his 20s, Mr Kamas had no choice but to live out on the streets.

"My family couldn't take care of me," is all he would say about why he ended up homeless. He bunked in with friends but even that didn't last long. In the end, he simply slept at void decks in the Boon Lay area. How did he survive those years?

"People helped me a lot. I got an old sofa to sleep on and someone gave me a pillow and a blanket. Sometimes they gave me food to eat too, if they cooked a lot, I got some. I managed to take showers





at the handicap toilet and I could store my things at an old cupboard near a shopping mall. Honestly, people helped me a lot because I am disabled. If I was normal, they would say, ah forget it!"

To earn whatever he could, he did illegal selling of items but soon stopped – he knew this could land him in even more trouble. But one thing that his homelessness taught him was to be fiercely independent. He explains how he navigated staircases on his own (by simply pulling himself up the stairs slowly), how he fell numerous times when his wheelchair got caught in the cracks of pavement (he helped himself up) or how he worked around the security personnel when they asked him where he lived (he would go up to his sister's home nearby).

## **TURNING POINT**

Kamas eventually went to get help at a social service organisation and a social

worker suggested that he find employment at Bizlink. And that was the turning point he needed.

"Bizlink helped me so much. They not only gave me a job but also found me a rental flat I could live in and paid my rent first and after I got my pay, I paid them back," said Kamas

who is an assistant line leader in the sheltered workshop at Bizlink.

Not only that, the staff also introduced him to competitive basketball and that set him on an incredible journey of achievement and self-discovery.

Kamas was introduced to wheelchair basketball by Mr Lim Puay Tiak, manager at Bizlink. Out of curiosity, he join them for a game and discovered his interest. Mr Kamas now trains with the Singapore National Wheelchair team twice a week and more during competitions. His team won third place for the Bali Cup in the Asean Para Games. And they are planning to compete again next year.

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“Basketball is a very tough game and it is challenging but that’s why I like it. I wanted to be a bowler but I found it quite boring so this game is better because it is fast and I enjoy it very much,” said Kamas showing us pictures of his team that he had stored on his phone.

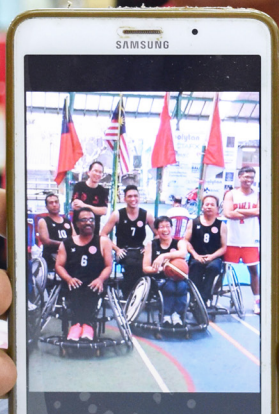
But more than anything, competitive basketball has given him a huge sense of purpose and he is more careful about what he does now. For instance, he tries not to spend too much time at the coffeeshop nearby, because people might recognise him.

Even though Kamas has

his worst days behind him, he still faces difficulties. Recently he had a particularly bad fall and had to be hospitalised. Despite the pain though, he has a cheerful, positive take on life. “I can make friends easily because I don’t want to be quiet, sit down and think about all the sad things. Don’t think about it,” he says.

We ask him what he would like to have if he had a wish and he shakes his head, indicating that he doesn’t have a wish.

Smiling he said: “I have a permanent place to stay, I already have what I wished for.”



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