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MyBF – A STUDENT’S BEST FRIEND

By D. RAJ and RJ DEVAN

AS a little girl of six, Kirthiga Krishnamoorthy loved accompanying her sub-contractor uncle to his worksite near her home. She put on safety vests and helmets and hung around with those working at the site. It was fun.

When she was 11, her life changed and the fun disappeared. Her parents separated, dad going to Kuantan and mum moving out with some of her children.

Kirthiga and her brother, however, moved in with their uncle and aunt, and she has been estranged from her mother and other siblings since.

Life was hard. But uncle Murugan and aunt Jayabarathi, who had no children of their own, cared for the two as their own.

After her SPM, Kirthiga worked at a petrol station as a cashier. Further studies were a distant dream – until she got a letter from Politeknik Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah in Shah Alam.

The offer letter came with an accompanying one. Not only had she been selected to do civil engineering, a dream from her childhood at the worksite, she was also getting a MyBF (My Brighter Future) grant from Yayasan TNB, a trust formed by energy compa-



Kirthiga Krishnamoorthy

Nia Odinia Bas

Mohd Addid Mohd Sharif

ny Tenaga Nasional Berhad.

MyBF grants are given to children of those in the B40 bracket. There is some extra for their expenses. They do not have to pay back a sen.

For Kirthiga, it was a gift from the heavens.

Her dream now is to be a civil engineer and again don the vest and helmet she wore playfully as a child. More importantly, she wants to show her parents that she can make a success of herself, even without them.

Nia Odinia Bas is another girl whose father left the family. Her older sisters had to care for the family, one working at a hospital,

another as a cashier at a petrol station in Kapit, Sarawak.

For her, too, further studies were a dream before MyBF came to her aid.

"If not for MyBF, I probably would not have continued my studies," admitted the Iban girl.

She wanted to be a teacher and tried her luck with Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris in Perak but was not accepted. Then came the offer from UiTM to study building surveying, with a MyBF grant thrown in.

The girl, whose farthest trip out of Kapit had only been to Kuching, did not even know what the offer was about. Neither did her teachers.

"We had to call the central Unit Pusat Universiti to figure out what it was."

When they knew, the whole community rejoiced.

In September 2018, she took her first ever flight, coming to Kuala Lumpur. She's scoring CGPAs of 3.3 these days and flies home every chance she gets. And, every day, she calls home to speak to mum Rossity Jimbun and her siblings.

She has also made many friends of all races now, a far cry when she only knew people from her Iban community.

Mohd Addid Mohd Sharif's is also a student who had few friends. His mum died when he was just one and his father remarried, leaving Addid with a different family. His stepfather and his stepmother are the only parents he has ever known.

The stepparents had seven children of their own and all are working and contributing to the family.

Addid, who is studying electrical engineering, adores the Japanese and would like to go to Japan and further his studies there. There is another reason for that. His biological mother was a Japanese translator and he now admires their work ethics and culture. He also studies Japanese as a second language.

Growing up in a village in Umbai, Melaka – his stepdad is a

farmer – his world revolved around his studies and his hostel. After his secondary school, he went to Universiti Teknikal Malaysia Melaka to do his diploma in electrical engineering.

The lad, who speaks confidently, was fairly good at both his studies and his extra-curricular work, but with diploma in hand, he was unsure about continuing. That was when MyBF came along. And he could continue with his degree in Electrical Technology, majoring in the power industry.

"The envelope was thick," he remembers. "I was so happy with the MyBF offer. I had hoped for a scholarship but I was not sure if I could get one."

Then, his family background again cast a pall.

"I did not know what name to put as my guardian," he said. "After long discussions, I put my stepdad's name. He is my father."

Addid wants to pay back to society.

"I want to start my own NGO and help needy students. There is one such NGO in Melaka. They give one-off help to students and scholarships. I want to do the same," he said.

He may claim not to have many friends. But someday, he could be the friend all students turn to.