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Title : First certified Open Water Diving Course for people with disabilities launched
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By : Valarie Tan & Imelda Saad
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SINGAPORE: Four Singaporeans have become the country's first group of people with disabilities to attempt scuba diving.

One might not be able to tell at once that they are people with special needs, especially since they seem to have taken to diving like fishes to water.

"It's something I've always wanted to do. Under the sea, I felt the freedom, just (like) an able-bodied, because everyone is equal under the sea," said Choo Poh Choon, a physically disabled diving student.

These individuals, who are from groups like the Singapore Association of the Visually Handicapped and the Association for the Deaf, prefer to be known as "handi-capable" individuals and are training for their PADI Open Water certification.

"I feel empowered, enriched and educated as well," added Jeffrey Soh, a visually handicapped student.

"It applies to my family members as well, because now they understand that being visually handicapped doesn't mean you're limited. You still can do things as what other people can do," he said.

Their diving course is part of an effort to encourage more people with disabilities to engage in sports and recreational activities.

In a separate charity drive, entitled "A Nation in Concert", to be staged at the Victoria Theatre on October 11 & 12, over 100 people with disabilities will take to the stage alongside several other professional volunteer artistes.

The concert seeks to provide a platform for all people to showcase their talents and abilities.

Proceeds from ticket sales will be channelled to four beneficiaries - the Handicaps Welfare Association, the Association for Persons with Special Needs, the Singapore Association for the Deaf and the Singapore Association for the Visually Handicapped.

- CNA/os