Trio bids to be first Singapore team to scale Everest since 2009

The NTU Singapore team, comprising of (from left) Jeremy Tang, Nur Yurina Yulakob and Dr Arjunan Saravanan Pilai, will draw upon their years of mountaineering experience in their bid to scale Mount Everest. Photo: NTU

SINGAPORE — Three Singaporeans are set to embark on one of the world’s most perilous expeditions in a bid to become the first Singapore team to scale Mount Everest since 2009.

Dr Arjunan Saravanan Pilai, 30, Nur Yurina Yulakob, 28, and Jeremy Tang, 18, will depart Singapore for the Himalayas on Sunday (March 26) and will spend up to early June to reach Everest’s summit.

The trio, whose expedition is being supported by Nanyang Technological University (NTU) and the National Institute of Education (NIE), have set a fundraising target of $180,000 for their journey.

For his 30th, the climbing trip will assuage the disappointment of a failed attempt to climb Everest back in 2015, which was meant to commemorate Singapore’s Golden Jubilee.

The team leader, who is pursuing a Postgraduate Diploma in Physical Education at NIE, was the co-leader of the Alumined Team Singapore Everest 2015 team who had to abandon their attempt in 2015 due to an avalanche.

"Having made it more than halfway up the mountain two years ago, I was disappointed that the team had to abort the climb. But had we departed just one day earlier, we would have been in a much more dangerous situation higher up the mountains," she said.

Her team member, 18-year-old Jeremy Tang, said the team was excited to scale the majestic peak.

"It is an extremely unpredictable and volatile rock, which means climbers have to be on their guard all the time," he said.

Dr Saravanan, 47, a teaching fellow from NIE, said that the team has chosen to climb Everest because of the high altitude, which will push the climbers to their limits.

He said the team planned to summit the peak at dawn on their second attempt, which will see them trying again on May 15.

However, the team, who hope their mission will help promote a resilient and can-do spirit among Singaporeans, acknowledged the huge challenge Everest will present.

"It is an extremely unpredictable and volatile rock, which means climbers have to be on their guard all the time," he said.

Dr Saravanan said the team would spend around two to three hours running up Bukh Tumit Hill and high-rise brick housing blocks.

"We also do our own strength and fitness regimen, and rock climbing to improve our technical skills," he said.

Ms Yurina added that her past experience on Everest will help the team plan better. "It’s not so much the mountain that you conquer, but yourself," she said.