

Singapore

Foiled by Nepal quake the first time, trainee teacher finally conquers Everest



File photo of Singaporean climber Yusrina Ya'akob. (Photo: NTU - NIE Everest Team/ Facebook)

SINGAPORE: Trainee teacher Yusrina Ya'akob has become the first Singaporean to summit Mount Everest this year after she reached the top of the world's highest mountain on Monday (May 22), expedition company Everquest Expeditions confirmed.

The 30-year-old successfully climbed a dizzying height of 8,848m above sea level at 9.40am on Monday, after more than 50 days of trekking.

For Ms Yusrina, the feat is especially sweet after her failed attempt to summit Everest in 2015, which was meant to commemorate Singapore's 50th year of independence. She was one of the leading members of the Aluminaid Team Singapura Everest 2015 which had to abandon the climb halfway following a powerful earthquake that struck Nepal.

For this year's attempt, Ms Yusrina teamed up with Singaporean climbers Jeremy Tong and Dr Arjunan Saravana Pillai. The trio's expedition is supported by Nanyang Technological University (NTU) and the National Institute of Education (NIE).



Mr Tong and Dr Saravana, who were both attempting to summit Everest for the first time, were unable to reach the top as they were both unwell.

Mr Tong, who graduated from NTU's Sports Science and Management programme in 2016, told Channel NewsAsia that he was forced to turn back about 200m from the summit due to hypothermia. He subsequently returned to base camp and his condition has since stabilised.

The 26-year-old fell ill in late April when the team was doing their acclimatisation rotations and he was forced to be transported to Kathmandu for a check-up. He was then diagnosed with high-altitude cerebral edema, a medical condition which causes the brain to swell with fluid due to high altitude.

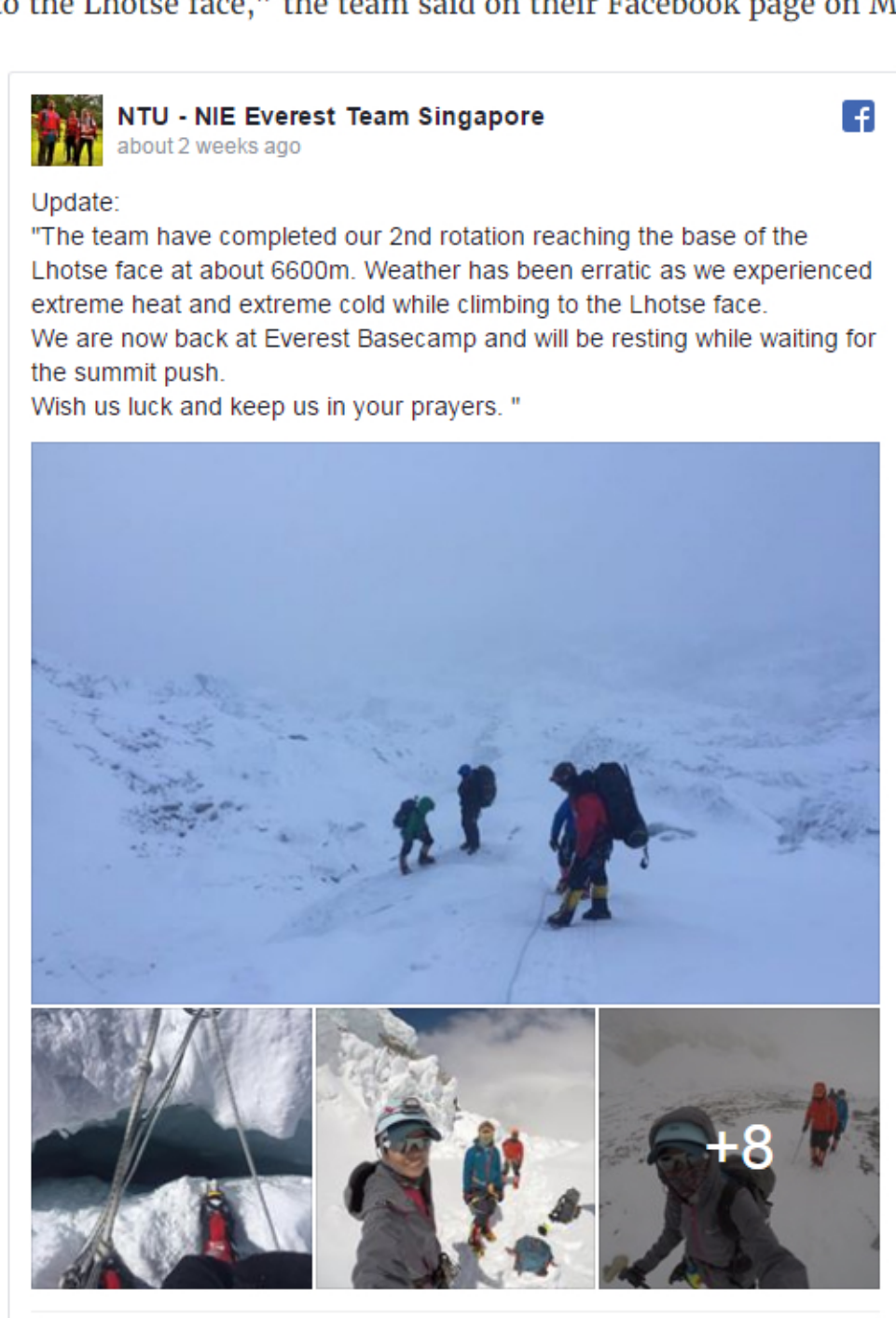
He rejoined his teammates at Everest base camp to attempt the summit push, only to encounter health problems at the balcony, Everquest Expeditions said.

Dr Saravana, a 47-year-old teaching fellow from NIE who has scaled several peaks including Kang Yatze II in India (6,400m), did not attempt the summit push as he suffered frostbite, Channel NewsAsia understands.

Ms Yusrina started her summit push from Everest's base camp last Thursday and reached the top one day ahead of schedule after taking advantage of good weather conditions.

The team earlier had to battle blistering weather conditions especially during the acclimatisation phase of the climb prior to the summit push, about 6,660m above sea level.

"Weather has been erratic as we experienced extreme heat and extreme cold while climbing to the Lhotse face," the team said on their Facebook page on May 13.



The last Singaporean team to summit Everest was an all-female expedition team eight years ago. Five women – Joanne Soo, Esther Tan, Lee Li Hui, Jane Lee and Lee Peh Gee – reached the Everest summit on May 20, 2009. Pilot Felix Tan also successfully climbed to the top last May.

Before her latest expedition, Ms Yusrina told Channel NewsAsia that she embarked on this second attempt because she wanted to "face the mountain again".

"I would not have been able to get over it (the disappointment) if I did not try again ... because the situation that forced us to abort our expedition was not because of a lack of ability but a natural disaster," she added.

With her triumph, Ms Yusrina has become the first female Malay Singaporean to conquer Everest.

Editor's note: The article originally stated that Ms Yusrina was the first Singaporean to summit Mount Everest since 2009. This was wrong. Pilot Felix Tan had conquered the mountain last May. We apologise for the error.

Source: CNA/am