

Trainee teacher successfully scales Mt Everest on second attempt



Ms Nur Yusrina Ya'akob (front), posing with her team-mates Jeremy Tong (middle) and Dr Arjunan Saravanan Pillai. The trainee teacher was the only one to successfully reach the summit of Mt Everest on Monday morning. PHOTO: NTU-NIE EVEREST TEAM SINGAPORE

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SINGAPORE - An earthquake had prevented her from reaching the summit two years ago but Ms Nur Yusrina Ya'akob was back at Mt Everest this year, pushing hard to give Singapore a belated 50th birthday present.

On Monday (May 22) at 9.40am local time (11.55am Singapore), the 30-year-old reached the summit of the 8,848m-tall mountain.

"The success of the expedition is a particularly sweet one for me. It is a good thing that I did not give up on my dreams after the Nepal earthquake in 2015," she told The Straits Times, in comments sent via the Nanyang Technological University (NTU) after she returned to Base Camp on Wednesday (May 24).

"The value of perseverance, resilience and resolve to finish what I started meant a lot to me. I hope my success inspire others to work on their own dreams no matter how big they may be and never to give up on them."

In 2015, Ms Yusrina was one of four climbers in Aluminaid Team Singapura Everest, whose goal was to scale Mt Everest in commemoration of Singapore's 50th birthday. An avalanche caused by an earthquake in Nepal forced the team to abort their attempt after they had passed the 5,500m mark.

Ms Yusrina is currently pursuing a postgraduate diploma in physical education at the National Institute of Education (NIE). Early last year she joined Mr Jeremy Tong, 27, and Dr Arjunan Saravana Pillai, 47, to form the NTU-NIE Everest Team Singapore.

The Singapore team raised more than \$150,000 to fund their expedition with the help of NTU and NIE. Their aim was to be the first multi-racial team from Singapore to summit Mt Everest.

But Mr Tong had to abort the climb around 200m from the summit due to hypothermia, while Dr Saravana could not attempt the push to the summit as he was suffering from frostbite.

Ms Yusrina was the only member of the team to reach the summit, with the support of her guides - Mr Dukchang Lama and Mr Nosang Bhote.

Taking advantage of good weather, she managed to reach the summit a day earlier than expected. She has also achieved her goal of being the first Malay-Muslim woman from Singapore to climb the summit.

Ms Yusrina said that when she reached the South Summit (of Mount Everest) at about 7.30am local time and saw the famed Hillary Step, she could not believe how close she was to the summit of Everest.

"At that point, I said to myself, this is it! And I told myself I will stand on the summit, and that I can do this!" she added, which she achieved two hours later.

Climbing to the summit was tough as she was tired from the lack of rest and food, but climbing down was one of the most dangerous experiences she has ever faced, said Ms Yusrina.

"Every step taken on the way down required a lot of focus and caution," she added.

She said her success in climbing the world's highest mountain is the success of the team too.

"We have supported each other through our training in Singapore and our Lobuche Peak summit, and the team also worked remarkably well together during the difficult times throughout the expedition," she said, adding that the team will rest a few days at basecamp before starting its descent back to Kathmandu.

"We are excited to meet our families and friends again after almost two months being away."

Mr Tan Chin Hwee, a member of Nanyang Technological University (NTU)'s Board of Trustees, said reaching the top of the world's highest mountain is a truly remarkable feat by Ms Yusrina.

"Having personally supported Yusrina in her previous failed attempt in 2015, her success today is an event that we can be proud of after seven years of training for it," said Mr Tan.

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The first Singaporean team to have successfully scaled Mt Everest was led by Mr David Lim who accomplished the feat in May 1998.