

Young NTUC

No Distance Too Long

By Michael Fong

No distance too long. These are the words Mr Mohamed Zahid Ahmad lives by. Ask him where he remembers them from and he would not be able to answer you. But it matters little. Ideas live beyond their makers. What matters is that they mean something to those who hold them dear.

Father, worker, sportsman and student, Mr Zahid is exemplary of his generation.

"I like challenges," declared the 38-year-old Logistics Specialist, who plies his trade at Baker Oil Tools' Singapore. A glance over his weekly schedule proves the point.

Four years ago, he was pulled into triathlon training by a friend, and naturally began covering extraordinary distances with his four limbs.

"A typical Olympic Triathlon consists of swimming 1.5 km, cycling 40 km and running 10 km," he said.

In short, it is not for the faint of heart. When competition nears, he cycles to and from work – over a good 25 km.

A few times a week, after work, Zahid heads off from Jurong to Toa Payoh, where he swims from 5.30 to 6.30 pm. By 7 pm, he is in class, studying for his diploma. He will finish up by 10 pm and then head straight home. On workdays when he does

“Challenges can be stepping stones or stumbling blocks. It's just a matter of how you view them.”

Mohamed Zahid Ahmad
(Second from right)



not have class, he is "home by eight, no matter what."

It is family time then. His two children are in primary school, and he spends the night with them going through their homework or just playing daddy.

Half of Saturday is for cycling, and half of Sunday for running. Tuesday evenings is football training for his company.

For the last couple of months, he had been spending more time cycling. He had signed up for the East North Challenge Ride II, a cycling expedition in Malaysia, from Terengganu to Penang, organised by NTUC Club.

"Along the way, we passed through towns and were always greeted by warm smiles and the waving of children; and

the beautiful scenery of Mother Nature followed us everywhere. Huge mountains towered round. The vast padi fields expanded beyond our reach. And rubber and oil palm plantations shook in the wind as we passed. These were what made our journey," he said, almost forgetting the sweat and toil of it all.

Then there is the other business of him being a unionist. Currently, he chairs the youth chapter for the Shipbuilding and Marine Engineering Employees' Union. He attends NTUC Executive Committee meetings and takes learning trips to Suzhou, China, among the other duties of his position.

"What I've learnt from my union involvement is to see the big picture. And I

explain these to fellow workers, who can become disgruntled over certain national policies," he said.

"In Suzhou, there were four ladies working on a stamping machine that in Singapore would be handled by only one person. Labour is cheap there. Competition for Singapore will be tough in the years ahead. We must be weary of the world at large, and understand our Government's motives in the big picture."

But Singapore's future does not faze him: "I take it more as a challenge. Nothing is impossible."

Perhaps, for someone who masters extreme distances without blinking, the future is always near enough to grasp.

East North Challenge Ride II

By Wilna Tan

The NTUC Club team of 41 strong cyclists from the Labour Movement, from the ages of 22 to 64, travelled from Terengganu to Penang from 13 August to 21 August 2006.

This event follows last year's Singapore-Terengganu Challenge Ride 2005. Leading the team was Mr Misnan Buang, a former Singapore national cyclist, and Chairman of the cycling interest group in NTUC Club. Beginning March 2006, the participants attended training sessions where they cycled more than 120 km each.

They flagged off from Grand Continental Hotel, Terengganu. Sweat and determination brought them through different states, including Kelantan, Perak, Kedah and finally Penang. The greatest challenge was cycling up the well-known Gerik Highway in Perak, stretching from Jeli to Banding, and peaking at 1,250 feet above sea level. There was no denying the participants' sense of achievement – and relief – upon completing the feat.

The final day saw the participants on a leisurely ride from Sungei Petani to Penang, completing the last leg of the challenge, before arriving at their final destination, City Bayview Hotel.

Mr Ang Wee Boon from ExxonMobil Singapore Employees' Union said: "I hope that I can be back next year for the completion of the challenge from Penang back to Singapore. I certainly enjoyed myself throughout the challenge." ■

