



The NUS team, standing tall, comprises (from left) Mr Ong Tze Boon, guides Lim Kim Boon and Edwin Siew, Kazakhstani guide Saken, mountaineers Jovi Loo, Leong Chi Yang, Pang Hui En, Lim Yi Xiang, Nur Hazirah Hassan, Jonathan Yee, Dmitrii Kharkovskii and NUS team leader Joel Lim. The team made it to the Ong Siew May peak, located in the Tien Shan mountain range that extends along the border between Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and China, on Aug 8. PHOTOS: JOEL LIM

## No peak is too far for young Singaporeans

Clara Chong

Singapore may not be home to any mountain, but more young adults here are seeking to scale new peaks.

At least two universities here now offer mountaineering as an activity, as interest in the sport has grown.

The National University of Singapore (NUS) Mountaineering Club, for instance, started with fewer than 10 members when it was founded in 2001. Today, the club has about 185 members.

Mountaineering veteran David Lim, 53, said he has noticed more young people taking up serious mountain climbing.

"I have observed more young adults partaking in alpinism and keen to tackle more complex objectives versus the traditional hiking-type peak like Mount Kilimanjaro," he told *The Straits Times*.

Last month, an NUS team scaled the Ong Teng Cheong (4,743m) and Ong Siew May (4,451m) peaks found in the Tien Shan mountain range that extends along the border between Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and China. This was done with the monetary and administrative support of the Ong Foundation. The Ong Foundation is a private charitable foundation set up in 2012 to support initiatives in areas such as education, health and the arts.

The NUS team sent to the Tien Shan mountain range consisted of eight students, including five mountaineering novices. Team leader Joel Lim, 23, said: "We prepared intensively for this climb, training three times a week for three months. Every Saturday, we climbed the two different sets of stairs at Bukit Timah Hill for a total of 12 repetitions, each with loads as heavy as 15kg."

Apart from NUS, the Singapore University of Technology and De-

sign (SUTD) has also formed such a club. Founded in 2012, SUTD's mountaineering club has a current strength of around 30. Its members have tackled regional peaks such as Mount Fansipan (3,143m) in Vietnam, Mount Dafeng (5,035m) in China and Mount Rinjani (3,726m) in Lombok, Indonesia. Its members also reached the summits of the two peaks named after the Ongs last week.

Asked why interest in the sport seems to be rising, Mr David Lim, who is also a leadership and motivational speaker, said: "In university, climbs are usually sponsored or subsidised and information about the peaks are also more accessible – people can sign up for a slew of courses and go for an Everest climb."

"Awareness on social media is also higher – pictures and videos posted online may have fuelled more interest," he said.

However, not all students con-



tinue such a pursuit after leaving school.

Former NUS Mountaineering Club member Nicholas Chee said of the sport: "It is not the cheapest and there will be things you (have to) give up."

The 28-year-old researcher, who has gone on three expeditions this year, said: "For me, I love this sport, I found a community to be in and my fiancée is also my climbing partner."

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Sharing that "top of the world" feeling: To prepare for the ascent, the NUS team climbed two different sets of stairs at Bukit Timah Hill for a total of 12 repetitions every Saturday for three months, bearing loads as heavy as 15kg.