

Braving Everest cold to raise suicide awareness

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Late last month, Mr Alhasan Alkaff was just 18km from the Mount Everest base camp when the fever he had been nursing for four days turned into pneumonia.

It forced the 22-year-old to end his expedition.

The postgraduate student from Yemen was part of a group of six international students from the National University of Singapore Business School who braved freezing temperatures to reach the base camp to raise awareness in Singapore of suicide as a mental health issue.

The trip was also an opportunity to raise funds for the Samaritans of Singapore.

The others in the group were: Ms Soyena Dhakal, 21, from Nepal; Mr Enrico Viora, 24, from Italy; Mr Mcrid Wang, 22, from China; Ms Napath Lertpinyopast, 27, from Thailand; and Mr Xavier Janssen, 25, from the Netherlands.

The idea to trek up to the Mount Everest base camp surfaced in late



(From left) Mr Mcrid Wang, Mr Enrico Viora, Mr Alhasan Alkaff, Ms Napath Lertpinyopast, Ms Soyena Dhakal and Mr Xavier Janssen on day two of their trek last month to the Mount Everest base camp. PHOTO: NUS BUSINESS SCHOOL

September, shortly after the students met during their master's programme.

The six friends faced challenging conditions when they arrived in Nepal. They started their hike on Nov 25 at Lukla village, situated 2,860m above sea level.

Throughout the journey, they posted their progress on social media platforms and encouraged friends and family to donate to their cause.

When Mr Alkaff came down with a fever on day three, his friends helped carry his 15kg backpack as

they continued their trek.

The fever did not subside.

From the village of Dingboche, 4,410m above sea level, where the group spent the night, Mr Alkaff had to be taken by helicopter to a hospital in Kathmandu, where he spent two nights.

The rest continued with the journey.

Said Ms Soyena: "Our morale was not high when he (Mr Alkaff) was evacuated, but we knew we were doing this for a cause. We decided to keep going."

The group eventually reached their fund-raising goal of \$5,000.

Now, they have decided to raise even more for the cause and are planning a fund-raising event at the NUS Business School next month. Their new goal is \$15,000.

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- Donors can support the Hiking the Himalayas for suicide prevention campaign at Giving.sg: <https://www.giving.sg/campaigns/hope>