

# 10

## S'poreans who make us proud

*As the nation celebrates its 47th birthday, CHAN CHOONG HAN and TONG JIA HAN highlight individuals who have made an impact this year*



PHOTOS: THE STRAITS TIMES, AFP, RAZORTV, WEE HONG LING, A\*STAR, MANOHARAN RAMALINGAM

### 1 KUMARAN RASAPPAN, 28, DOCTOR

Dr Kumaran received a hero's welcome when he returned to Singapore on June 3, and again when he went back to work on June 15.

This was because the doctor from Tan Tock Seng Hospital had succeeded in ascending Mount Everest's peak, enduring extreme conditions to reach the 8,848m-high

summit.

He was the first Singaporean-born Indian to do so, and raised almost \$24,000 for the Tan Tock Seng Hospital Community Charity Fund through the expedition.

Dr Kumaran also facilitated the upgrading of a medical post in the impoverished Sherpa village of Phortse, in the Everest region.

In June, former president S R Nathan presented him with the inaugural Abdeali Tayebali Award for Courage, which was established to recognise Singaporeans who demonstrate courage.

Dr Kumaran said there were times he had felt like giving up during his Everest ascent, but he persisted and made his way to the peak. His message? Don't give up your dreams.



### 2 FENG TIANWEI, 25, TABLE-TENNIS PLAYER

The paddler made history last Wednesday by bagging Singapore's first individual Olympic medal in 52 years. She conquered her jitters – including fear of failure – to beat Japan's Kasumi Ishikawa 4-0 in about 35 minutes, winning bronze.

A Singapore citizen since 2007, Feng also helped the nation clinch a silver medal as part of the women's team in the 2008 Beijing Olympics. She will play in the women's team today to battle for the bronze medal.



### 3 JOEL YANG, 34, SCIENTIST

In March, Dr Yang beat 200 people from South-east Asia, Australia and New Zealand to bag an award that recognises innovators under the age of 35, whose technical work promises to shape the future.

Winning the regional TR35@Singapore award means that he is in the running for the global TR35 award, whose past winners include Facebook co-founder Mark Zuckerberg.

An Agency for Science, Technology and Research scientist, Dr Yang is known for his work on how light is affected by very small, nano-sized materials.



### 4 MANOHARAN RAMALINGAM, 58, LONG-TIME BLOOD DONOR

Mr Ramalingam was awarded the Medal For Life by the Singapore Red Cross Society in June for 40 years of blood donations.

The defence executive officer with the Singapore Combat Engineers made his 200th blood donation in March. He made his first donation in 1972.

Mr Ramalingam, who said donating blood is a "must", does so once every three months at the Health Sciences Authority blood bank in Outram.



## 47TH BIRTHDAY



## 5 SUHAIMI RAFDI, 44, CATHAY CHIEF

Last month, Mr Suhaimi, chief executive of Cathay Organisation Holdings, won the Berita Harian Achiever of the Year Award, which honours Malay/Muslim role models.

He had to overcome family challenges as a single father after his wife died nine years ago, and worked his way up from being a trainee manager at KFC to becoming Cathay's CEO. While juggling family and work, he also attended night classes for two distance-learning degrees.

He intends to pursue a PhD course in the near future.



## 6 CHUA JIN SEN, 7, YOUTUBE STAR

Jin Sen, better known as Dr Jia Jia, is arguably one of the most beloved online personalities among Singaporeans this year.

The Maha Bodhi Primary 1 pupil is best known for portraying a minister explaining the Orchard Road floods and MRT breakdowns in the Singlish Minister YouTube clip he acted in with his elder brother, Jin Chou, 12. The pair won the Best Video Blog prize at the Singapore Blog Awards last month. Jin Sen, who is dyslexic, will star in a new movie, Taxi! Taxi!, with Gurmit Singh and Mark Lee.



## 7 JOSEPH SCHOOLING, 17, SWIMMER

Schooling is the first Singaporean swimmer to meet the Olympic "A" qualifying time, which earned him a spot in the London Games and let him bypass the selection process that other athletes had to go through.

In last year's SEA Games, Schooling broke several national records and secured two golds, one silver and a bronze. Specialising in the butterfly stroke, he holds the national record over three distances: 50m, 100m and 200m. He was also named Sportsman of the Year in May.



## 8 WEE HONG LING, 43, VISUAL ARTIST

Earlier this year, Dr Wee was invited to exhibit at the Pop-Up Singapore House arts and cultural exhibition in London during the Olympic Games.

The exhibition showcases works by overseas Singaporean artists. Dr Wee's exhibit, which features contemporary ceramic sculptures, opened on July 24.

She clinched the third prize at the Contemporary Clay Biennial held by the Western Colorado Center for the Arts this year. Participants included 54 established

ceramic artists.

She has held exhibitions in six countries, and her works are in the permanent collections of The National Art Gallery here and the Shigaraki Ceramic Cultural Park in Japan.

Dr Wee became an artist in 2001. She holds a PhD in geography from Rutgers University, and is the first Singaporean to study in the summer programme at the International Space University in Stockholm, Sweden.

She was once a research fellow at the United States National Aeronautics and Space Administration.



## 9 COLIN GOH, 42, COMIC ILLUSTRATOR AND HUMORIST

In June, Goh launched a bilingual digital comic book he illustrated, entitled Dim Sum Warriors, which won acclaim from the comic industry.

Legendary X-Men writer Chris Claremont told Goh and his film-maker wife – who helped with the comic, such as in the plot and technical aspects – that the comic was "brilliant".

Goh said of his comic: "I think Singaporeans will feel a natural affinity with a story about gongfu-fighting food. I hope it will make them laugh...and a little bit hungry."

Goh, whose popular Sunday Times column ended in May after nine years, said he was returning to his first love: cartoons and comics.

He drew all the cartoons in the book Search Inside Yourself, written by Google's first Singaporean employee, Mr Tan Chade Meng.



## 10 KEVIN LOH, 14, GUITAR PRODIGY

Kevin is the first Singaporean to participate – and win – in the junior category of the Guitar Foundation of America's International Youth Competition, one of the biggest guitar competitions in the world.

He learnt to play the guitar when he was five and his father uploaded to YouTube videos of Kevin playing the instrument at the age of 10. The clips caught the attention of the prestigious by-invitation-only Yehudi Menuhin School of music in Britain, which offered him a place when he was 12.

He is the first non-European student in the classical-guitar programme, and is one of only four students in it this year.

Back in Singapore for two months, Kevin will play in a free concert series called Postcards From Home at the Esplanade Concourse next Wednesday and Thursday.

He received the HSBC Youth Excellence Award in 2010.