Lost trekker had only small bottle of water

BY BEN NADARAJAN

A SMALL bottle of water was all Associate Professor Francis Pavri had with him when he became separated from his group of trekkers on a mountain in Johor on Saturday afternoon.

And it kept him going for 24 hours until he was found at around noon yesterday.

The Singapore Management University adjunct lecturer had reached the peak of the 1,000m-high Gunung Belumut near Kluang with his six friends—all lecturers—the day before. The party realised the 61-year-old don was not with them when they were heading down.

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HELP FINALLY CAME: Prof Pavri, who was found at around noon yesterday, said he had to ration his water, drinking "one sip at a time".

Prof Pavri, speaking at his West Coast home after his ordeal, said: "I had to ration my small bottle of water, drinking from it one sip at a time."

In the first six hours, he could still use his cellphone and called his wife in Singapore, and also sent SMS messages to fellow trekkers, asking for help. By 7pm on Saturday, his phone battery was flat.

He followed the river to the base of the mountain but could not find an opening out, so he waited by the river bank for help.

Gunung Belumut's 6km trail to the summit and back down takes about eight hours to complete. In 1989, three Singaporeans and two Malaysians were lost for 10 days there, before coming upon a loggers' site 40km away.

Trekkers who have scaled Gunung Belumut said it is safe as long as climbers stay on the trail.

But Mr Teo Wee Eong, 29, who has been up its slopes five times in the last six years, said there are several side trails off the main one, and trekkers could easily meander off on these.