Go down mountain myself? No problem, I thought.

S'PORE PROF ON HOW HE GOT LOST ON JOHOR MOUNTAIN FOR 12 HOURS

The path just vanished. Then the sky went dark.
Go down mountain myself? No problem, I thought

By Crystal Chan
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He had taken about seven to eight hours to climb to the summit of a Johor mountain.
He thought he could do the descent in about half the time.
Instead, Dr Francis Pavri, got lost on the 1,010m-tall Gunung Belumut in Kluang, Johor, for 12 hours on Saturday.
What followed was a dramatic chain of events, leaving his wife and colleagues panicking and fearing the worst.
Dr Pavri, 61, survived on a 500ml bottle of mineral water during the 12 hours he was lost and was finally rescued yesterday afternoon by the Malaysian police.
The adjunct business professor of Singapore Management University had gone hiking with six other colleagues.
But he wanted to be the first to reach home for a Chinese New Year gathering with his friends.
In the end, he became the last to reach home.
Dr Pavri and his team left Singapore on Friday evening, arriving in Kluang at 8pm the same day. The group had set out from Prime City Hotel in Kluang at 6am on Saturday, beginning their trek from an oil palm estate near the mountain.
When The New Paper interviewed him at his semi-detached house at West Coast Rise last night, Dr Pavri, of Chinese and Brazilian parentage, said he was relaxed throughout the ordeal.
He said: "I've trekked for the last 15 years but it was my first time to Gunung Belumut. Usually, my wife accompanies me. But she was busy on Saturday so she didn't go along.
Dr Pavri did not think of asking one of his colleagues, Dr Raj Kumaran, 54, to accompany him when he met the latter on his way down.

Dr Pavri said: “When the rescuers came to me, I was so happy that I said ‘thank you’ to all of them. I never expected 28 people to search for one person.”

He said: “The 12 hours went by pretty fast. I was relieved when the police found me. ‘I had wanted to get back in time for my appointment, but I ended up missing the gathering. That’s ironic.’

“The police tried to get me last night. But when it got dark, I told them over the phone to go home and rest. There’s nothing you can do at night.”

Dr Pavri claimed he was not afraid of being attacked by wild animals. He said: “It was quiet up there. As it was a fairly easy trek, the climbers, who were all dressed in T-shirts, shorts and sneakers, had taken only water and tidbits.

Luckily, Dr Huang’s father had a good contact with the local authorities for their efforts. I hope this is expected 28 people to search for one person.”

He explained Dr William is my dad’s best friend. Not only is he a local but his extensive local contacts also made him a natural choice when we thought of whom to seek help from.”

In all, 28 police officers were sent to look for Dr Pavri.

without a guide.

“We were so excited and we set off, thinking we knew the route well. We were probably too optimistic and didn’t think anything would happen,” explained Dr Raj.

As it was a fairly easy trek, the climbers, who were all dressed in T-shirts, shorts and sneakers, had taken only water and tidbits.

Luckily, Dr Huang’s father had a good friend in Malaysia, businessman William Lau, whose contacts helped the group get in touch with the local authorities.

Dr Huang said: “William is my dad’s best friend. Not only is he a local but his extensive local contacts also made him a natural choice when we thought of whom to seek help from.”

In all, 28 police officers were sent to look for Dr Pavri.

He was found near the river, where he remained throughout the ordeal.

Dr Pavri said: “When the rescuers came to me, I was so happy that I said ‘thank you’ to all of them. I never expected 28 people to search for one person.”

“I’m really grateful to the Malaysian authorities for their efforts. I hope this is good for bilateral relations.”

It also helped that Dr Pavri had his handphone with him so he could pinpoint his location to the police.

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Dr Pavri claimed he was not afraid of being attacked by wild animals. He said: “It was quiet up there. All I suffered were some cuts on my hands and blisters on my legs. I’m still limping, so I may take medical leave today.”

Madam Shu, who drove to Johor at 7am yesterday, said: “Francis was so dirty when he came out of the forest. He showered at William’s place before coming back.”

So what are his thoughts on the experience?

“Never go alone when you hike. Nobody will know if you get lost.”

His is not the only reported case of trekkers getting lost on Belumut.

In September 1997, 36 climbers, including 25 students, were rescued after they were stranded for 15 hours half-way up the same mountain.