

go the distance

Whether it's power peddling, open-sea swimming or island walking, these good samaritans are pumped up for a cause

By Tay Suan Chiang

long ride home

Engineer Felicia Ong occasionally goes to East Coast Park to cycle for fun. But from June 9 to 13, she will be clocking over 700km peddling from Kota Baru in Kelantan to Singapore.

It is her first time cycling long distance and for charity.

Ms Ong, 27, is a member of Bike-Aid (Singapore). Since 1992, it has raised funds for charities, like the Spastic Children's Association and the Kidney Dialysis Foundation, on its Singapore-Penang and Hatyai-Singapore trips.

This year, Bike-Aid aims to raise \$300,000 for the Women's and Children's Healthcare Foundation.

Riders are expected to raise at least \$5,000 before they are allowed to take part. They also have to come up with their own bikes, and pay for expenses during the trip, such as meals.

It is less than a month away and Ms Ong is feeling the heat.

The single girl did not have a bicycle of her own. Fellow cyclist and

trainer A. Ramachandran heard about her plight and lent her his spare bicycle.

Bike-Aid holds weekly training sessions, which she attends. The cyclists cycle around Singapore, covering between 120km and 140km each time.

There are also excursions to Malacca, which is a 250km distance each way.

"The long-distance, whole-day rides simulate the conditions which the cyclist will have to cope with on the trip," says Mr Peter Lye, a committee member with Bike-Aid.

The cyclists are expected to cover 175km each day, starting from 6.30am till late.

Cyclists are free to go at their own pace. But if it gets dark, and they are still nowhere near the pit-stop, a support vehicle will pick them up.

The terrain is expected to be flat in the north and undulating as they head south.

"The road conditions are expected

to be good save for the occasional pothole and road kill — civet cats, snakes, rats, cats and dogs are not uncommon," says Mr Lye.

Strong headwinds, the scorching sun and rain are just some of the weather conditions which will prevail.

"For the unaccustomed, abrasions on the bum are a sure thing," says Mr Lye.

It sounds hilarious but he says it is no laughing matter. The pain is excruciating, especially in the shower. His recommendation is to slap on lots of Vaseline.

For Ms Ong, one immediate obstacle is meeting the \$5,000 requirement. She has raised \$2,500 so far from friends and colleagues.

But if a cyclist fails to meet the target, the committee members will assess how hard he has tried.

"In our experience, the \$5,000 is not impossible to reach for the dedicated and yet sufficiently discouraging for the flippant," says Mr Lye.