

She triumphs on two wheels

Former beauty queen inspires through her cycling experiences



The model and former beauty queen posing with her own bike at the Ride for Malaysia launch at Sunsuria City. — NORAFIFI EHSAN/The Star

“STAND back up when you fall. Fall down seven times, stand up eight.

“We have often heard these wise sayings. Yet, how many of us apply this in our life?” RasAngela Wong, 34, a model and former beauty queen (Miss Malaysia Asia Pacific 2004 and Galaxy Model Look International 2004) shared, speaking about her experience of recovering from a bicycle accident last year and returning to cycling.

The statuesque beauty is one of the celebrities supporting the Ride for Malaysia on July 30.

The accident left a large scar on her forehead, but that does not bother her.

“We can have a flawless appearance for only a limited time. And there are so many more important moments and experiences that we can learn by focusing on the positive,” said the Penang-born who has been living in Shah Alam since she was nine.

She said she almost lost her eyesight and although some may see it as a traumatic experience, she is thankful she survived.

“Instead of being afraid to get back on the bike, I was determined to advance my cycling knowledge so that I could share with other cyclists how to minimise the chances of making similar mistakes.”

If you see her today, you might not think that she has been in such an accident. RasAngela carries herself with confidence and poise, not to mention the fact that she just completed a 10-day cycling tour, covering 1,200km, including ferry rides across rivers and the ocean, to South Vietnam, over a month ago.

The event planner who runs her own company, DuetConcepts, started cycling when she was young and got her first bicycle at the age of 13.

Although she had not cycled for a long time, she picked up cycling again when she was diagnosed with multiple compressed discs in her back, as she could no longer do heavy lifting or running.

"I have three compressed discs in my spinal cord, and although that is incurable, cycling can strengthen my core muscles. It also gives a full body workout.

"Cycling correctly can improve one's appearance from slim to fit," she said.

Despite being involved in another minor cycling accident during a race in Cambodia recently, where her arm and leg were wounded, she pressed on to complete the remaining 10km in the race and won fifth placing in the Women's Open Category.

Wong, who loves bicycle touring, believes that cycling has helped her see the world in a different light, and it trains her not just physically but mentally and emotionally, especially during long-haul cycling in less-than-pleasant weather.

"Cycling is environmentally-friendly and connects me to people," she said.

The bicycle and cycling apparel and accessories brand ambassador said cycling around Malaysia is her top priority and she has explored the north Malaysia-Thailand border right down south to Melaka.

Her first short distance bike tour was



Wong believes cycling can benefit Malaysians.

“ Malaysia is a multi-ethnic country, and all forms of sports activities like cycling help to promote a spirit of cooperation, teamwork, compromise and trust. ”

RasAngela Wong

from Simpang Pulai to Cameron Highlands just two weeks after her cycling accident last year.

Last November, she also went on her first self-supported bike tour to Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai, and in May this year, her 10-day self-supported bike-packing tour in South Vietnam.

Wong — whose English name is a combination of the name Angela, given by her mother when she was young, and Ras from the name Rassmann, meaning ambition, independence, strength, reliability, determination and professionalism, a name she took on when she became a model at 18 — also writes a column for a local cycling magazine.

After she stopped modelling in 2005, she combined both names to become “RasAngela” which is coincidentally also the name of a beautiful city in Tunisia.

She believes that cycling can help grow values such as patriotism and *muhibbah* or multicultural spirit.

“Malaysia is a multi-ethnic country, and all forms of sports activities like cycling help to promote a spirit of cooperation, teamwork, compromise and trust. It goes beyond culture, race and religion.

“Whether it is leisure cycling or competitive racing in a team, it brings people from all walks of life together with a common goal — from doing our part to support local businesses all the way to riding under the banner of Jalur Gemilang in an international event,” she said.

Cycling also connects people from different backgrounds, not just those who cycle but also other road users, she added.

“When a cyclist rides to different places, they will meet and greet strangers along the way,” said Wong.

Wong rides a road bike with aerodynamic geometry for both leisure and competitive racing.

Ride for Malaysia will flag off at 6.30am on July 30 from the Celebration Centre at Sunsuria City in Putrajaya.

There is a Fun Ride of 30km along nearby scenic routes. There is also a Family Ride of 5.5km.

There will be lots of goodies up for grabs and fun stuff to win.

Bicycles will be available for rent at the venue. Register via sites.thestar.com.my/rideformalaysia/.

Children are encouraged to bring their own bicycles.