

SINGAPORE

S'poreans keep fighting spirit alive

Three resilient individuals tell *my paper* how they're coping with downturnBUDGET
2009

RACHEL CHAN

SINGAPOREANS are finding ways to weather the storm being stirred up by the recession. It is time to be resilient, said three Singaporeans who spoke to *my paper*.

Here are their stories:

Mr Razali Rahman, 43, security supervisor

He lived in a rented room with his 44-year-old wife and two children, aged five and seven, for six months between February and August last year.

But he never gave up hope – or his textbooks.

He convinced the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore to sponsor him fully for a part-time diploma programme at BMC Academy.

Because he needs time off to study, he is paid less than his colleagues.

"I am willing to suffer now because I want to get my diploma in accounting. I might even go on to pursue a degree," said Mr Razali.

He was retrenched from his job as a storeman in late 2007 and ended up living in the rented room.

"If there was food, we would eat. But if there wasn't, then we'd just keep quiet," said the secondary-school dropout.

But help poured in for him.

He receives a \$350 cash handout and \$100 worth of food vouchers monthly from the



HAPPY FAMILY: (Clockwise from top right) Daughter Nabillah Ilyana, son Muhdraihan, security supervisor Razali Rahman and wife Norlailah get by on little, but are full of hope. (PHOTO: JAMIE KOH)

North West Community Development Council.

New Hope Community Services is also putting a roof over his head, charging him only \$150 a month, until he gets the keys to his new two-room rental flat in four months' time, after the authorities reduced the waiting period of 13 months.

"My dream is to become an accounts officer in the finance sector. By the time I finish my studies, the economy would have improved. It can't be gloomy skies forever."

Mr Gilbert Quek, 36, managing director of creative agency Dream Digital

He has lived through three recessions.

"Good times, bad times, I can survive," said Mr Quek, who also distributes luxury golf acces-

sories in Europe. "I never put all my eggs in one basket."

He is prepared to convert his 10 full-time permanent staff to contract workers, after which he would allow them to take on freelance jobs, as long as the work does not interfere with his company's interests.

He foresees that it will take another two years for the economy to ride out the storm.

Ms Tan Hui Ting, 20, polytechnic student

The accounting student is the younger of two children living in a four-room flat in Bedok, and is graduating next month.

To lighten the financial burden on her parents – her father works as a snack distributor, while her mother is a merchandiser – Ms Tan is hoping to find a company willing to sponsor her further education.

The young woman, who lives on a daily allowance of \$4, also works as a part-time tutor.

"My first option would be to continue studying and get my degree. If that doesn't work out, I don't mind applying for a teaching job with the Ministry of Education," she said.

rachchan@sph.com.sg

FOR MORE REPORTS, SEE PAGES B1 AND B4-B7

HELPDESK 我的字典

Resilient: 坚韧 jiān rèn

Dropout: 退学学生
tuì xué xué shēng

Contract: 合同 hé tóng