

“THERE is a lot more to life than just work, and if people choose to find the time to also do the things that they enjoy, they would find that they have a more fulfilling life,” says Dr Tan Soon Seng.

Work plays a significant part in people's lives. Whatever they earn from their jobs ensure that the lights stay on at night and that there's always food on the table for the ones they care for.

However, for many individuals, it is not an easy task to achieve a balance between work and leisure, especially in today's unpredictable and fast-paced world.

And yet, Dr Tan has it all worked out for him.

In his line of work as a consultant gastroenterologist at Subang Jaya Medical Centre, his earning capacity is tied to his work hours, but he has found a sweet spot that he is comfortable with.

“What I try to do as a doctor is balance all that I like in life. Besides my work that I enjoy, I also love all things beautiful – from travelling, fashion and jewellery to food, wine, opera and sports.

“I make it a point to make some time to enjoy these things in life by giving up working extended hours,” he says.

Dr Tan believes that one of the main struggles people have with such a business model is the willingness to give up that sort of earning power. It is a challenge he finds a lot of people have, especially if they do not manage their time wisely.

“They have to know how to balance their time with how much they want to earn, and know when to call it a day, stop or cut down on the working hours,” he adds.

Combining pleasures in life

One of the things Dr Tan manages to squeeze in after cutting down on work hours is to keep fit.

After turning 50, Dr Tan has taken to cycling – inspired by the bicycle he got as a gift from his beloved sister.

“I have always liked sports and in my earlier years, I was actively playing badminton, as well as jogging and running.

“As I grew older, injuries and pain became a hindrance to continuing with these sports. However, when I got a bicycle, that allowed me to continue to look after my fitness.”

At first, Dr Tan took to the streets for his cycling activities. His wife, on the other hand, was not very keen on this as cycling in Malaysia can be dangerous with the lack of proper bicycle lanes.

However, her worries were put to rest when a friend introduced him to an up-and-coming activity known as virtual cycling through an app called Zwift.

Zwift allows Dr Tan to continue cycling in the safety of the indoors without the issues of finding the right location and having the right weather.

“I enjoy virtual cycling because all you have to do is hook a bicycle onto a smart trainer and, depending on the location chosen – which can be anywhere in the world from France, to New York and even Austria – the virtual trainer will simulate the terrain.

“I particularly enjoy this because it allows users to combine cycling with games and lets them utilise the physiology of the body.”

In addition to keeping his fitness up, Dr Tan has also made time for his love of travelling and exploring different countries.

He even managed to combine both passions of cycling and travel by going on several cycling trips with family and friends.

One of the trips organised with his friends was a cycling tour of South Korea, which included riding from Seoul to Busan for about a week, covering a total of 640km on bicycle.

“We carried the bicycles and assembled them when we reached South Korea.

“We hired a tour guide who would cycle with us for the entire trip and there were two vans that came along with us to carry the luggage.

“So, every day we would cycle about 120km or so as we travelled from city to city.

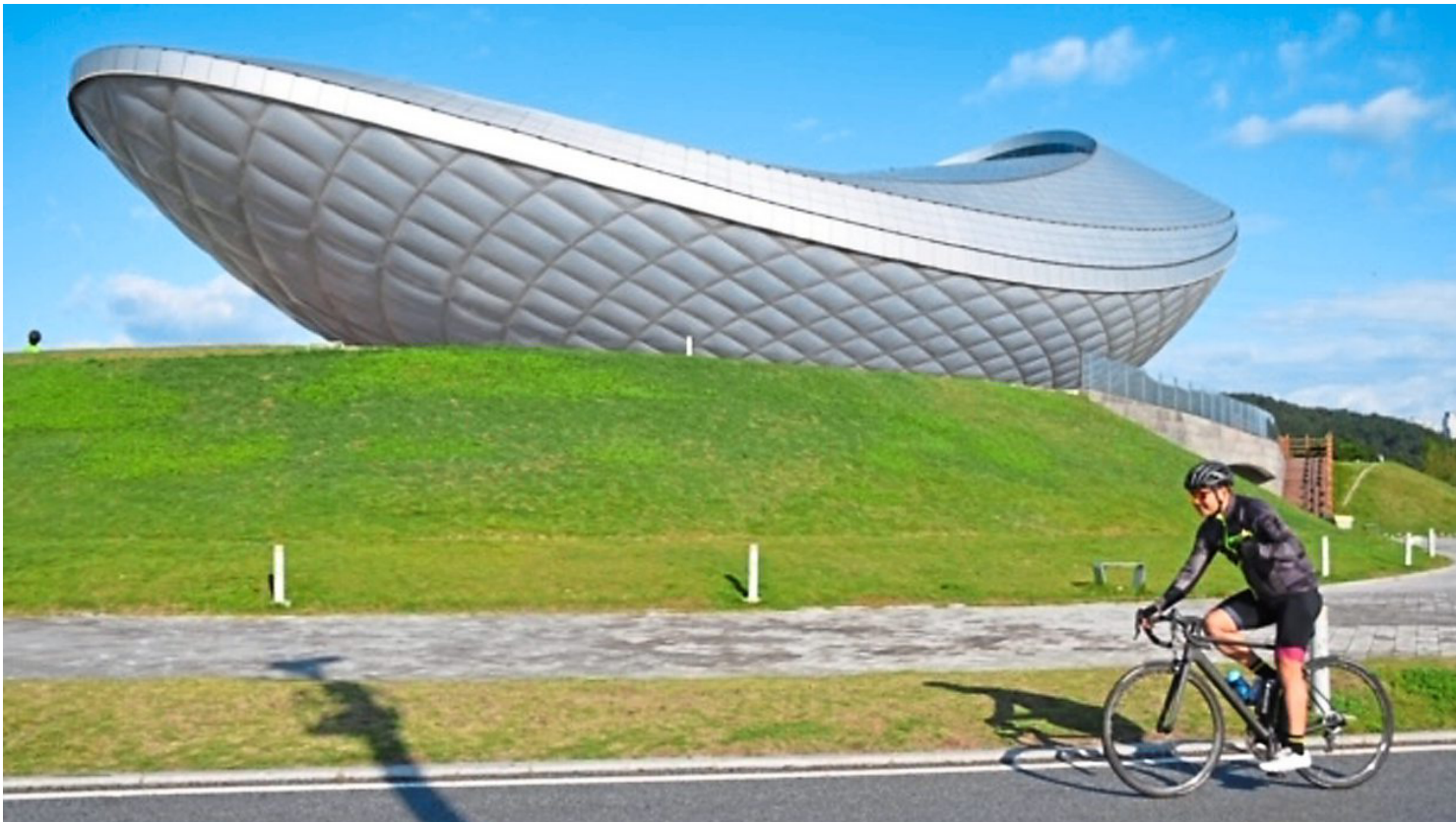
“The amazing part of this is that 90% of the trip was on bike lanes and they took us to many places away from the usual tourist places.”

Besides his travelling and adventures outside of Malaysia, Dr Tan also finds enjoyment in exploring what delicious delights his homeland has to offer.

Together with some colleagues who share his interests, a small group of them often go

BALANCE IS THE KEY

Time management is crucial for one to indulge in personal interests away from work



Dr Tan went with friends on a cycling tour of South Korea, riding from Seoul to Busan for about a week and covering a total of 640km.



Family time is important for Dr Tan, who took his wife, three children and semi-wheelchair-bound mother-in-law on a vacation in Kyushu, Japan.

out to spend some time enjoying the food and the company.

“We often have regular meetings with friends and we will scout for interesting restaurants where we can enjoy a meal and taste some good wine.”

Family at the heart of it

Cycling and adventures with friends are not all Dr Tan does with his time outside of work.

As a family man, he also ensures that they

have family holidays together. In a trip with his family last year, he took his family – along with his mother-in-law who is semi-wheelchair-bound – for a vacation in Kyushu, Japan.

“When it comes to travelling, I like to experience the culture and taste the food. We drove ourselves during this trip and I like this because we can stop anywhere we want and experience the local activities.

“An example would be having dinner with a host that is native to the location. My family is very important to me and I cherish the

time we spend together,” says Dr Tan.

Besides travelling, he would spend time together with the family by playing sports like badminton, among other activities.

“One of the things I have wanted to do is to go camping, but I have yet to convince my family to agree on a camping trip,” he says with a chuckle.

Dr Tan notes that life is an experience of an individual's self and people need to make it as fulfilling as they can by not only doing things that they like, but also contribute to society and spend time with the people that they love.

“Don't forget that you can enjoy life with those around you. It's not mutually exclusive. You can do a good job at work, but at the same time you can do all the things you like to do in your free time – especially if the time is organised well enough.”

The proud husband of a beautiful wife, and father of two daughters and a son, stresses that there is a motto that people should live by.

“I always tell my children that there are two main things in life – following the heart and following the head.

“The ways people can go about it is that if they follow their heart solely, they will lead a very interesting life, but there is going to be a lot of ups and downs.

“However, if people follow their heads entirely, they will have a very steady life, but it would probably be boring.

“So, I always believe in the balanced path – follow the heart with some input from the head.

“That's a better way to live,” says Dr Tan.