



Mr Yasuyuki Ozeki enjoys a pint of Guinness yesterday for which he cycled over 12,000km (7,500 miles) from Osaka in Japan, via Siberia and the Gobi Desert. Photograph: Alan Betson

Victor over Rosslare and Gobi Desert earns his pint

By Róisín Ingle

YASUYUKI Ozeki (27) may go down in history as the man who travelled the greatest distance to secure a pint of Guinness. The distance, 12,000km (7,500 miles), is farther than most people's local, and Yasuyuki did it on a bike.

Yesterday morning he arrived amid the flashing lights of a Garda escort at the Guinness Hopstore in Dublin, where his considerable thirst was finally quenched.

He was feeling "very tired but very happy," he said, as he com-

pleted the final leg of his journey. It began in his home town, Osaka, in Japan last April.

He cycled alone through China, Mongolia, Siberia, Russia, Germany, Belgium and the UK, arriving in Rosslare on Thursday. And there the man who had successfully negotiated the Gobi Desert on his bicycle promptly got lost.

Throughout his journey he kept Irish people informed of his progress through the *Gerry Ryan* radio programme and *The Irish Times*. In Russia he stayed with the mother-in-law of *Irish Times*

Asia Correspondent, Conor O'Clery.

It was on a previous Irish visit that his *Pedal Power to Ireland* project first got rolling.

"There is no Guinness in Japan and there is lots of Guinness in Ireland," he said, downing his second pint. He loved the country and wanted to foster good relations between Europe and Asia.

"It's great that it is all over," said his girlfriend, Ms Maria Tsalapatis (27), who had travelled from her home in Denmark to form part of the welcoming committee.

'Big Issues' magazine to close as grant is stopped

By Pádraig Yeates, Industry and Employment Correspondent

THE Big Issues magazine is expected to close next week with the loss of nearly 100 jobs. A further 300 to 400 sellers of the magazine, who receive 80p on every copy sold, will also be severely affected. The magazine has been in financial difficulty for some time.

Yesterday the editor, Mr Niall Skelly, said the decision to close follows the withdrawal of a Government grant of £200,000. He said that the Taoiseach, Mr Ahern, had promised the money and that, as late as Monday, officials of Mr Ahern's Department had assured him that "it was only a question of crossing the Ts and dotting the Is, and we should receive the cheque shortly."

He believed that the Department of Finance had objected and he asked why the Taoiseach had "allowed himself to be overruled by his Minister for Finance."

However, a spokesman for the Taoiseach strongly rejected Mr Skelly's claims last night.

He said that Mr Ahern "had always supported the objectives of *The Big Issues* magazine and was sympathetic and supportive in trying to help them find a way out of their difficulties." He added that the company had debts of £600,000, of which £250,000 was owed to the Revenue Commissioners.

The Big Issues had already received over £1 million in Government funding through FAS. "Officials of the Taoiseach's Department had attempted to assist the company in restructuring and bringing in a break-even plan. The company was told a grant would be requested from the Department of Finance on the basis of that plan."

"This was on the understanding that the company had provided full information and gave a commitment that it would concentrate solely on the production and distribution of the magazine." The spokesman said that neither the Taoiseach's Department nor the Department of Finance was satisfied that these requirements had been followed.

Mr Skelly said the magazine's printers had agreed to produce the last edition, due out next Thursday. After that he would make arrangements for sellers to receive the Scottish edition of the British magazine, *The Big Issue*.