

15 FEB 1996  
Everest - expedition  
ATTEMPTS TO SCALE MOUNT EVEREST IS ON THE CARD

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 15 (Bernama) -- Malaysia is to embark on a multi-million ringgit ambitious attempt to conquer Mount Everest, the highest peak in the world, in May 1997.

Picking up the cue from Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's quotes, 20 local climbers will attempt to plant Malaysia's flag on Everest's 8,848m peak.

Minister of Youth and Sports Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin told reporters here today that if the attempt proved successful, it would make Malaysia the first nation in the South East Asian region to conquer Mount Everest.

Known as Project Malaysia-Everest '97, it was the brainchild of Dr Mahathir who once said: "...we must have confidence to achieve all of our dreams, this includes climbing the Everest, sailing across the Pacific, conquering the Arctic and Antarctic."

Muhyiddin said the ministry decided to accept the challenge with the the Malaysian Climbing Association (MCA) and Sports and Culture Foundation of Malaysia as co-organisers.

Dr Mahathir will launch the project estimated to cost RM4.5 million on April 20.

The organisers have lined up numerous programmes to make the project a success with training already kicked off early last year.

Muhyiddin said 20 climbers from MCA had be selected based on their physical and mental fitness, technical skills possessed and leadership qualities as well as their ability to give long term commitment to the goal.

The climbers will be undergoing their training at few different locations including Shingri Glacier in India, Mount Cook Aspring in New Zealand. They will also attend a mountain seminar in Nepal organised by the Union International of Associations Mountain Guide.

He said other overseas training stint would also be organised specially to develop their climbing skills under the supervision of a technical advisor, Captain M.S.Kholi of India.

Muhyiddin said 12 climbers would scale the final peak while the rest will act as a back-up.

He said his ministry had provided an advance of RM300,000 as payment for the permit to the Nepalese Government to climb Mount Everest. He hoped the private and public sectors as well as individuals would come forward to contribute the remaining cost of the project.

He said various fund raising programmes had also been lined up for the country's maiden project.

Sir Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay Sherpa were the first two persons to reach the highest peak on earth on May, 29, 1953 and to date, Mount Everest has been climbed by more than 550 climbers in 200 expeditions from 20 countries.

The mountain has claimed 95 lives, 40 of them Sherpas, a tribe living on the Everest's slopes and making their livelihood as guides and porters for the climbing expeditions. -- Bernama

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