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Climber's family relieved and ecstatic

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - The family of N. Mohandas, one of the two Malaysian climbers who conquered Mount Everest, was both relieved and estatic as it watched the historic moment on television today.

Speaking at the family's flat at Bandar Baru Sentul, Mohandas's wife, R. Manimagalay said the whole family, including her three sons, Vickneswaran, 12, Vickrem and Deneshwaran, 8, and mother M.Kanthai, 63, had stayed glued to the television determined not to miss the moment.

The family was informed by the Project Malaysia-Everest '97 secretariat last night that Mohandas and three other climbers would make the final push for the summit today.

And this afternoon, they were overjoyed when it was finally confirmed that Mohandas was one of the two climbers who had reached the top.

Mohandas, 36, who works with Shell Trading Sdn Bhd, is a keen sportsman, who had climbed most of the country's peaks before joining the Everest expedition

He and N. Magendran, 34, a teacher at Sekolah Kebangsaan Teluk Gadong, Klang, reached the summit at 11.55am Nepalese time (2.10 Malaysian time).

The historic moment was televised live by RTM with the co-operation of Telekom Malaysia Berhad. News of their feat was relayed at 2.15pm.

Manimagalay, 36, said the family was confident that the climbers would manage to conquer Everest, the world's highest peak, although they did not know Mohandas would be one of the climbers who would eventually reach the summit.

Although she was concerned about her husband's safety, Manimagalay felt reassured as Mohandas had told her that they would only try to reach the summit if it was safe to do so.

The expedition was the brainchild of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who launched it on June 4 last year.

The duo, both members of the Malaysian Climbing Association, were two of the 20 climbers who attempted to scale the mountain on their first attempt.

Two others in the final ascent Gary Choong, 39, and Mohd Fauzan Hassan, 29, could not make it due to health reasons.

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