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Malaysia Everest team will go on a nationwide road show

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THE Malaysia Everest team will go on a countrywide road show to promote climbing, Youth and Culture Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin said yesterday.

Speaking at a press conference after celebrating the success of the climbers, Muhyiddin said that the conquest of Everest is not the last thing that will be done.

"We are capable of achieving difficult feats, but we need the support and encouragement of the people.

"With this success, and support and encouragement, the team can further reach greater achievements," Muhyiddin said, adding that the team will probably attempt climbs up the Everest every three years.

"We will start by encouraging Malaysian youths to climb our own hills and mountains."

The minister added that although monetary rewards and Government recognition will be given to the climbers, they never asked about rewards.

"The spirit is very high. For the climbers, achieving this feat was overwhelming enough. It is something that money cannot buy," Muhyiddin said.

He added that there will be a concert on June 14 at the Dataran Merdeka for the people to celebrate the success.

There will also be a meeting with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Mahathir Mohamad, and an audience with the Agong.

When asked if Malaysians will also attempt to conquer the depths of the sea and space, Muhyiddin said that there is a possibility of doing so.

Meanwhile, expedition leader Nor Ramllee Sulaiman said the team will work closely with the Nepalese Climbers' Association for exchange programmes for climbers.

Meanwhile, the team were given a rousing and emotional welcome when they returned via the international airport yesterday.

The two climbers - M. Magendran dan N. Mohandas - who reached the peak of the Everest, were mobbed by well-wishers carrying banners and the Malaysian flag.

The team was later whisked to the Prime Minister's Department where Acting Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim graced an official welcome ceremony for the team.

Magendran and Mohandas did the nation proud by being the first Malaysians to conquer Everest at 2.10pm (Malaysian time) on May 23 1997. The two were members of the 23-member expedition in a project mooted by Dr Mahathir.

When asked about their experiences, Magendran said that it was difficult for him to express his feelings because it was too overwhelming.

"I felt joy and glory because I have achieved not only my dream but also the dream of the nation when I reached the summit.

"I felt extremely happy and cried at the achievement. However, the victory was when we descended the mountain and reached the base camp safely," Magendran said.

He added that as he was approaching the peak, all he could think of was that the Prime Minister, his family and the whole nation were watching him.

As for Mohandas, he said he was surprised at the grand welcome given.

When asked if he was afraid at any point of time during the climb,

Mohandas said: "If I were afraid, I would not have joined the expedition in the first place."

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