

06/04/1997

Signature drive in support of Everest team

PETALING JAYA, Sat. - A signature campaign was launched today to whip up public support for the Malaysian mountain climbing team now battling the cold and hardship to plant the nation's flag on Mount Everest.

At a ceremony in Subang Jaya, Deputy Youth and Sports Minister Datuk Loke Yuen Yow started the ball rolling by signing a banner which was then put on display.

Shoppers at Subang Parade are encouraged to sign on 10 banners and donate RM1 to show their support for the team.

"There is no problem with funding for the climb," Loke told reporters later, "but this is just an opportunity for all Malaysians - young and old - to take part in the national project."

The Donate-A-Ringgit/Signature Campaign is jointly organised by CIS Network Sdn Bhd, Subang Parade, Majlis Sukan Bank-Bank Malaysia, Radio Televisyen Malaysia and Longines, the project's official watch.

It is also the highlight of "The Great Escape" exhibition at the shopping centre, which will showcase outdoor adventure equipment. The exhibition is on until April 13.

Also present were Everest project director Zainal Abu Zarin, Majlis Sukan Bank-Bank Malaysia president Mohd Saidin Osman, CIS director Vincent Lim and Longines product manager Dexter Chan.

The Everest project, the brainchild of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, was launched in June last year.

A 20-member climbing team was put together to scale the 8,848-metre peak. Reports indicated that several team members have already reached Camp One at 5,822m and are in the process of carrying equipment for further ascent.

Eleven members are expected to make the final trek to the peak and to reach it by May 11. If the climb is successful, Malaysia will be the first Southeast Asian country to conquer Everest.

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