

# Frigid night for expedition team

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**GENTING HIGHLANDS:** Two men and a woman spent nine hours in a blizzard and still made it out smiling.

The three are on a mission to conquer the South Pole next month and their overnight stay at the Snow World here on Saturday was the start of their tough preparations to face the freezing Antarctica.

The encouraging attitude of the Polar Explorers Group International team members brought added hope for their expedition next month after their debut attempt, a feat not yet accomplished by any person.

Host, First World Plaza, entertained the guests of the "slumber party" with temperatures falling below -20°C.

A simulated blizzard was created with freezing air injected into pressurised water as it flowed out from tanks and ice molecules were blown into the room from 24 nozzles in the ceiling as snow.

Though it was very cold and wet, team leader and general practitioner Dr M. Kamaruddin Md Isa described the

exercise to help acclimatise their bodies to the freezing conditions of the Antarctic as "fantastic."

He said the sleepover was just one of the many preparations to get them ready for the journey which starts on Oct 15.

His team mates dietician Suhardi Alias and sports psychologist Sharifah Mazlina Syed Abdul Kadir were also elated and felt more confident of future exercises and the actual mission itself.

All three are married and both the men have children.

And they have their family's blessings to go on the adventure.

Asked why the team was not spending every night at Snow World until they leave, Dr Kamaruddin said they were still tied to their jobs.

The expedition, spawned by a challenge from Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, would see the team bundled up in four layers of clothing, walking across the South Pole and dragging sledges containing food and equipment in temperatures ranging between -20°C and -90°C.

Beginning at Norway's Blue One station and ending at New Zealand's Scott Base, the journey is 3,800km long and was expected to take 120 days.

Dr Kamaruddin said they planned on walking, wind sailing or skiing, depending on weather and terrain conditions, for 20 hours a day.

The team would bring light food, *ketupat*, dried meat and fruits like apricots and raisins, which are a good energy source.

The team would also take along a special medicine concocted by Dr Kamaruddin that heats up the body as well as 120 butane gas canisters.

With a 50% survival rate, the team would have to rely on each other's expertise, polar heart rate monitors, beacons, GPS tracking systems and compasses and satellite phones.

This is because it would be "feasibly impossible" to accommodate a rescue team since there are no refuelling stations in the Antarctic.

The team expects to make history for Malaysia and plans to name their route after the country.