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Sports-English Channel
MALIK DOES MALAYSIA PROUD

By: Asan Ahmad

DOVER (England), Aug 4 (Bernama) -- Malaysian marathon swimmer Abdul Malik Mydin did Malaysia proud after a successful attempt, crossing the 32.8km English Channel last night within 17 hours 42 minutes.

The 28-year-old Penangite reached the finishing line at Wissant Beach, France, at 7.50pm (London time) about 3am Malaysian time.

His historic feat will be recorded in the Malaysia Book of Records as the first Malaysian and Southeast Asian to conquer the world's most challenging channel.

Malik began the swim at 2.08am (London time) Sunday morning from Abbots Cliff Beach, about 5km from Dover Marine Base.

At Wissant Beach, Malik was received by Seberang Prai Utara District Officer Datuk Abdul Ghani Ariffin and Malaysians living in France.

The former national cyclist was supposed to finish at Cap Gris Nez but was swept away by strong current at the last seven kilometres of his swim, forcing him to change direction and landed at Wissant Beach, which is five kilometres from Cap Gris Nez.

Before Malik began his swim, he received a telephone call from Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad at about 1.36am (London time) to wish him success on his mission to cross the channel.

Half-way through his mission at about 10.02am, Dr Mahathir made his second call to Malik.

According to the swimmer's Public Relations Manager Rahayu Ahmad, Dr Mahathir advised Malik to keep up with his mission to cross the channel.

Dr Mahathir's message: "I and Datin always prayed for Malik's success" was written by Coach John van Wisse on a manila card and was shown to Malik throughout his swim.

Although the weather condition was fine throughout his swim, there were many challenges faced by Malik.

Strong waves caused by heavy vessel passing through the channel affected his momentum, but he soldiered on to conquer the channel.

The water temperature was perfect at 16 Celcius, while the speed of the wind was between 15 and 17 nautical miles per hour.

Malik's swim was monitored by officials from the Channel Swimming and Piloting Federation headed by its Secretary-General Michael Oram.

They were on board the pilot boat "Aegean Blue" piloted by Oram himself, who has the power to make any decision on the swim.

Throughout his attempt, the condition of the channel was stable except for the waves caused by passing vessels and commercial ferries carrying passengers between Dover and Calais.

Feeding time for Malik was allowed every 20 minutes to ensure he consumed enough natural water to neutralise his body.

Malik's toughest test was in the last seven kilometres to the finishing line as strong current forced him to change his finishing direction at Cap Gris Nez to Wissant Beach.

He was swimming against strong current for four hours and he almost ran out of energy.

However, with his strong determination to accomplish his mission, he went on although at certain paces he was seen tired.

At this stage, he was closely monitored by his coach to ensure Malik's condition was stable.

With one kilometre to the finishing line, van Wisse jumped into the

waters and swam alongside Malik to give him moral support after realising Malik was tired fighting against the current.

God Willing, Malik managed to touch the finishing line.

Once the final siren was switched on, van Wisse grabbed Malik and led him to the beach to meet the supporters who have been waiting since 5pm (local time).

In fact, before the pilot sounded the siren, no one was allowed to touch Malik, including his coach.

If the swimmer was touched before the siren, his swim will be disqualified.

Upon reaching the finishing line, Malik kissed the Wissant Beach to tell the world he had succeeded in his cherished dream.

He received a telephone call from Youth and Sports Minister Datuk Hishammuddin Tun Hussein who congratulated him on his success.

Then, it was history. Malik has realised his long-time dream to become the first Malaysian to conquer the channel.

He also fulfilled Dr Mahathir's wish, who is the Patron of the English Channel Challenge.

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