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Malik-Channel

PUMPED-UP MALIK MYDIN DETERMINED TO CONQUER ENGLISH CHANNEL

By: Neville D'Cruz

MELBOURNE, March 13 (Bernama) -- Malaysian marathon swimmer Malik Mydin, who is training here to attempt the English Channel in July, has made tremendous progress, to the delight of his Australian coaches, siblings Tammy and John van Wisse.

"Malik has responded brilliantly, both physically and mentally," John told Bernama today.

"We have been working on speed, flexibility, strength, diet and core stability -- all vital components needed to conquer the treacherous English Channel."

John, who swam the English Channel in 1994 and is a professional ironman triathlete, said he was ``absolutely surprised'' with Malik's improvement in the past eight months.

"Malik has the mental toughness, it's now just a question of skill which he is developing rapidly, he said.

Tammy, who in 1993 became the fastest person to swim the English Channel and is the holder of four world marathon swim records, said the amazing transformation that had taken place in Malik's swimming in recent months was testament to his strong desire to fulfil a dream to swim the English Channel.

"Malik now looks very strong and comfortable in the water and is making huge improvements every day.

"He has also shown much dedication to the task of putting on weight to guard against hypothermia while battling the cold English Channel waters," she said.

The van Wisses have been putting Malik through his paces at the nearby Mentone and Black Rock beaches and in the pool at the Brighton Baths and the King Club in Sandringham.

Malik, 27, who is on his second trip to Melbourne to train with the van Wisses, said his immediate task would be to tackle the 46km Perlis-to-Langkawi swim on May 24 and 25.

He said that while he was confident of becoming the first person to swim the Malaysian Channel, it would be a good lead-up to his English Channel crossing and a test of his mental and physical condition.

"Tammy and John have been wonderful coaches. They are very professional in everything they do and they treat me as part of their family, with their mother, Els, cooking food fit for champions," said Malik, who is sponsored by the Malaysian Electrical Corporation.

He said he was grateful for the support given him by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and the people of Malaysia. "I will not let them down for want of effort," he said.

Malik said he was determined to cross the English Channel to join the elite group of Malaysians who had achieved fame against the odds.

They included the conquest of Mt Everest in 1997 by Malaysians M.Mahendran and N.Mohanandas and the solo sailing effort around the world in 1999 by Datuk Azhar Mansor.

John said the first swimmer to cross the English Channel was in 1875 and since then, there has been only seven per cent success rate. "More people have climbed Mt Everest," he added.

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