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Sports-Channel

SWIM A GIFT FOR PM, SAYS ABD MALIK

By: Asan Ahmad

DOVER (England), Aug 4 (Bernama) -- National marathon swimmer Abdul Malik Mydin has presented his feat in conquering the English Channel as a gift to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

"This success is for Datuk Seri (Dr Mahathir) and I think it is the most precious gift before he retires...Datuk Seri has guided me a lot to succeed, in fact, his supportive words have helped me realise the dream of all Malaysians.

"I would like to thank Datuk Seri and his deputy (Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi) and also Youth and Sports Minister (Datuk Hishamuddin Tun Hussein), and most importantly all Malaysians who have prayed for my success," he told reporters here today.

Abdul Malik said his success in taming the English Channel was the success of all Malaysians as he was but their representative.

The 28-year-old conquered the channel at exactly 3am Malaysian time today after swimming 58kms in 17 hours and 35 minutes, according to official records by coach John van Wisse.

Abdul Malik said the distance was further than planned as he had to swim across currents which swept him off course for four hours in the last 5kms.

He also had to end his swim at Wissant Beach, some 5kms from his original target of Cap Gris Nez, in Calais, which extended the original distance of 32.8kms.

He said the feat would have taken less time if he had not gotten stuck for four hours in a zone with strong currents.

"However, I did it after facing various challenges during the swim. My two-week wait for the attempt was not in vain and I am very proud to have realised it," he said.

On his feelings throughout the swim, Abdul Malik said it was a challenge unlike any other he had faced in his life so far.

"As soon as I boarded the pilot boat for the starting line at Abbott Cliff, I felt seasick and, realising this, I asked the pilot to start my swim early. When I was in the water, everything changed and my concentration was more focused on the swim.

"I was swimming well until I reached the second shipping lane when I began to tire. Seeing this, an American friend (whom I know only as Matt) jumped into the water to accompany me and his presence lifted my spirits to continue," he said.

He later regained the rhythm of his strokes until he reached the final zone where he faced strong currents, Abdul Malik said.

On facing the currents for four hours, he said at that point, his spirits were really tested and he was so grateful that he managed to overcome the obstacle.

"Even though I started to feel very tired, there was never a decision to stop and I held tight to my promise to Datuk Hishammuddin that no matter how painful the challenge, I will continue, even if faced with death.

"I will not back down and I will do it dead or alive, and this was my promise before the attempt and the supportive words of the Prime Minister, who was following the swim through telephone calls, also fueled my spirit," Abdul Malik said.

The success makes him the first Malaysian and Southeast Asian to conquer the channel and his name has been chiselled in the annals of

history as a Malaysian son who has performed a monumental feat.

Among Asians, Abdul Malik is the fourth to succeed in the attempt, after swimmers from China, Korea and Japan.

Meanwhile, van Wisse called Abdul Malik's success "amazing."

"It is a great and amazing achievement by Abdul Malik who comes from a country with hot weather and can prove to the world that he can swim in the channel which is very cold and challenging. He has done Malaysia proud," van Wisse said.

Abdul Malik will go on two months rest while he ponders his next move.

"I will carry on with one other thing after this and, if possible, I would like the PM himself to announce it...that is, if he is willing to be the patron," Abdul Malik said.

Meanwhile, the president of the Amateur Swimming Union of Malaysia, Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim, congratulated Abdul Malik on his success and said the union was contemplating a suitable reward for the swimmer.

-- BERNAMA

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