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Sports-English Channel (preview)

SWIMMER MALIK TO CROSS ENGLISH CHANNEL FRIDAY

By: Asan Ahmad

DOVER (London), July 22 (Bernama) -- After four years of preparation, Malaysian marathon swimmer Abdul Malik Mydin is ready to realise his dream of crossing the 32.8km English Channel on Friday.

He is only waiting for confirmation from the Channel Swimming and Piloting Federation (CSPF) to start his crossing.

Malik's coach John Van Wisse expects the crossing to go on as scheduled.

"The tide is unpredictable but the condition will be better from July 23rd to 27th as the tide is good enough for the swim...it is neap tide, which is suitable for the swim," said Wisse.

He said most swims took place the neap tide which happened every 14 days of each month and during this period the tide would be slacker and safe for the swim.

He said that if the tide did not change, the swim would have to be put on hold to after Aug 5th when the neap tide returned.

"The one factor which we have no control over is the single most important ingredient for a successful swim," Wisse told Bernama.

The 28-year-old swimmer wants to be the first Malaysian and the first person from Southeast Asia to swim across the most challenging channel. Since 1875, some 7,000 swimmers from across the world had tried but only 600 succeeded.

Malik's mission is to prove to the world that Malaysians are as capable as any others to overcome extreme challenges. This is in line with the vision of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad who wants to see more Malaysians performs feats of daring.

It is however not an easy task for Malik to accomplish with the strong waves and currents in the channel.

"Everything has been set and nothing will stop me. I'm very determined, thanks to all Malaysians for the support. I want to prove to the world that 'Malaysia Boleh'," said Malik.

The swim will be monitored by CSPF pilots, headed by Michael Oram who has been monitoring the water current in the channel over the past one week.

Malik said he preferred to swim at night when sea conditions would be a little bit stable, not windy like the during the day which would be difficult for him to maintain consistency.

The former cyclist expects to complete the swim and reach the finishing point at Cap Griz Nez Calais in 14 hours.

If he succeeds, Malik will be the second Asian to cross the channel, the first being Zhang Jian on May 22, 2000 within 12 hours.

The fastest record so far was by American Chad Hundebly who crossed the channel in 7 hours 17 minutes on Sept 27, 1999.

Malik's most remarkable achievement so far was swimming 48km from Kuala Perlis to Langkawi in May this year and before that he took part in the 26.4km marathon swim from Rafles Weild to Zurich last year, finishing fifth among 20 swimmers taking part.

He also swam from Bukit Tambun to Pulau Aman, carrying the 2001 SEA games torch. Before that he helped in the Kosovo fund-raising in 1999 by swimming across Padang Kota to Butterworth.

Meanwhile, Malik's personal doctor Prof Dr Ahmad Farouk Musa had described Malik as very fit and is ready for the challenge.

"Based on my observation, his energy can sustain him non-stop for 20 hours. The last time I checked his heartbeat before he left for London, it was 56, a very perfect level for a marathin swimmer...he is very fit," said Dr Farouk who will follow Malik on a special boat to monitor his condition during the swim.

Thousands of supporters mostly Malaysians residing in London will cheer Malik on his daring journey. Youth and Sports Minister Datuk Hishammuddin Tun Hussein will also be present.

-- BERNAMA

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