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UiTM students reach summit of Mount Everest

By Arman Ahmad

SHAH ALAM, Sun. - Two Malaysian students reached the summit of Mount Everest at 11am Malaysian time yesterday (8.45am Nepal time).

Universiti Teknologi Mara students Muhamad Muqharabbin Mokhtarruddin, 22, (picture, left) from the Faculty of Sports Science, and Ahmad Reduan Rozali, 22, (right) from the Faculty of Applied Sciences, spent 40 minutes on the summit.

The duo began the final leg of their journey on May 15, leaving at 4pm from Camp 4 at an altitude of 7,984 metres, and arriving at the famous Hillary Step at 7am.

The pair reached the south summit at 8am yesterday. The final 300m stretch from the south summit to Everest's peak took 45 minutes.

The students were part of the "Everest for the Country Expedition", jointly organised by UiTM and the Ministry of Youth and Sports.

The pair left for Everest with accompanying officer Muhamad Fauzan Hassan, their training officer Associate Prof Zulkifli Abdul Kadir, and medical officer Associate Prof Dr Anuar Suun.

Youth and Sports Ministry secretary-general Datuk Tala'at Hussin said their achievement would be an inspiration to others.

Tala'at said the ministry had planned a year-long programme to present Muqharabbin and Reduan exemplary role models for youths.

"We will arrange for them to meet youngsters in the city and rural areas, as well as students and National Service trainees," he said.

The two undergraduates' parents were bursting with pride.

Muqharabbin's mother, Sharipah Wook, 43, wept on hearing that her son had reached the summit of the world's highest mountain.

"When he said he wanted to climb the mountain, I was against it, but he said I should not be afraid. He is a very determined boy."

Ahmad Reduan's mother, Sahrom Mohd Noor, said she continually prayed for his safety.

"I never expected him to have such ambition," she said. "I was shocked when he told me. He was so persistent, I had to let him go."

The expedition cost about RM1.5 million, including the costs of training both in and out of the country, equipment, trekking permits, agency costs, food and transport.

Muqharabbin and Ahmad Reduan had undergone intensive training and climbed peaks in the Karakoram Range in Pakistan, Mont Blanc in France and Mount Aspiring in New Zealand.

The only Malaysians to have previously conquered Everest are M. Magendran and N. Mohandas, who reached the peak on May 23, 1997.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, at the launch of the national-level Teachers' Day celebration in Shah Alam, congratulated the two young climbers.

"Not everybody could achieve that. I pray that the team returns home safe and healthy," he said.

In Putrajaya, former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who is the patron of the expedition, also congratulated the two undergraduates for their success.

"There are many other challenges which we can take up, it need not necessarily be mountain climbing. One should attempt to swim long distance or head for the South Pole after this," he said.

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