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Malik gets `cheer up' call from DPM

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MARATHON swimmer Abdul Malik Maidin yesterday received words of encouragement from Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi through a telephone conversation after his attempt to swim across the English Channel had to be postponed yet again.

Abdullah told Malik that he would pray for Malik's safety and success.

After the telephone call, Malik said he was confident of realising his goal.

Several days earlier, Malik had also received encouragement from Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin and, on Saturday, from Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

The first scheduled attempt to swim across the English Channel on July 23 had to be postponed.

Announcing the latest cancellation, Datuk Talaat Hussein, who is heading the Channel swim secretariat here, said Malik had been advised against the attempt by his coach John van Wisse and the Channel Swimmers and Piloting Federation because of the sudden change in weather conditions.

On Saturday night, journalists covering the event were alerted through the short message service by the secretariat to be on standby as there was a possibility of Malik taking the plunge early yesterday.

A convoy of supporters and journalists made their way to Dover from London. But on arrival, they were informed that the attempt had been put on hold again.

The group of 30 supporters will leave for home tonight without witnessing Malik achieving his feat.

Malik, however, is said to be in good spirits. He is continuing with his training.