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Malik pulls off marathon swim to Langkawi

LANGKAWI, Sun. - Abdul Malik Mydin today became the first Malaysian to swim from Kuala Perlis to Kuah, a distance of 48km.

The 1994 Malaysia Games cycling gold medallist clocked 14 hours, three minutes and 13 seconds to reach the Kuah jetty at 11.48am, about four hours earlier than expected.

Sharing his moment of joy was Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who had flagged him off at the Malaysia Fisheries Development Board jetty last night.

Abdul Malik, 28, arrived at the Kuah jetty witnessed by a large crowd.

The Penang-born swimmer undertook the feat to prepare for a swim across the English Channel from Dover, England, to Cap Gris Nez in France in August.

He is attempting to become the first Malaysian to cross the 32.8km channel.

Looking fit and happy after the long swim, Abdul Malik said Dr Mahathir's support had given him the strength to reach his destination in less than 20 hours.

"He (Dr Mahathir) took the trouble to be in Kuala Perlis and also here (at the Kuah jetty). This inspired me to swim faster. This is a gift for him," he said.

At the ceremony to welcome Abdul Malik, Dr Mahathir launched the English Channel Challenge 2003 programme. MEC Dagang Sdn Bhd is the main sponsor of the programme.

Recalling his experience, Abdul Malik said he could have reached Kuah jetty much earlier if not for the big waves about 15km from Kuah jetty.

Throughout the swim, he was inside a two-metre deep cage measuring six metres long and four metres wide to protect him from jelly fish and other dangerous marine creatures.

He was monitored by seven Royal Malaysian Navy divers from the naval ship MV Setia Cekal.

Abdul Malik is determined to cross the English Channel, which has a water temperature of between 14 and 18 degrees Celcius.