

No mountain too high

> Octogenarian banking icon summits Mt Kinabalu a second time because I have no more excuses'

■ BY ALLEN WONG
newsdesk@thesundaily.com

PETALING JAYA: At 84 years old, retired AmBank Group chairman Tan Sri Azman Hashim recently became one of the oldest Malaysians to reach the summit of Mount Kinabalu, Southeast Asia's highest mountain.

He said the climb early this month was his second success, with the first having been achieved 13 years ago when he celebrated his 71st birthday at the peak.

"After my first climb, I wanted to challenge Mount Kinabalu again because I wanted to prove to myself that I could do it.

"I committed myself to take up the challenge again when I reached 80 years old, but had to postpone it due to a minor operation.

"Now at 84, I feel healthy and have no more excuses."

He said he found the inspiration to climb Mount Kinabalu when he saw a video of a woman friend of his doing it.

"I saw in the video that she really struggled during her climb. I think she never had any physical training prior to it, but she managed to reach the peak.

"I said to myself: 'If she can make it, I should be able to make it', he said, adding that as an avid sports person, he keeps himself healthy by playing golf three times a week.

Azman also said the most important thing about being successful is not about commitment, but willingness to finish tasks.

"Life has many different types of challenges. During my banking life, there was a crisis that could have meant the end of the bank or my career.

"Climbing Mount Kinabalu is only a physical challenge, but the most important thing is having the willpower to overcome any challenges.

"The power of the mind is more important than your training and preparation," he said, adding that happiness is a key factor to leading a healthy life.

"I sing a lot and often perform with the Universiti Malaya Symphony Orchestra. Even when I am practising and not performing, singing keeps me happy."

On whether he would attempt a third climb, Azman said he would like to keep that option open.

"I don't really have any more challenges on my list but I like to do different adventures, like jet skiing and scuba diving."

Former Bandar Utama Rotary Club president Ong Hock Siew, who has climbed Mount Kinabalu 60 times, said he has absolute respect for Azman.

"I couldn't have imagined an 84-year-old man climbing Mount Kinabalu if I did not



Azman at the peak of Mt Kinabalu earlier this month. - PIC COURTESY OF ONG HOCK SIEW

witness it. But Tan Sri has shown me that he could. He even made it to the top on his own without much help," Ong said, adding that Azman was an inspiration to aged individuals.

"I believe Tan Sri made it successfully because he has one of the strongest mindsets I have seen. Many who are much younger than him would complain halfway through the climb. Tan Sri didn't even complain once about anything throughout the three days," said Ong, who is a platform speaker and trainer for a private company.

He said good pacing is a key requirement

for a successful climb.

"You need to have a good plan just like when you are starting a new business. Most people usually get too excited and always go faster than they should."

Ong, 73, also said it was very important to never give up on dreams, even in later years.

"You can still set targets and goals. You can go out and achieve them no matter what your age. The long and hard climb will be a reflection of what life has been for each of us. Those who endured will reap the fruits of success," he said.