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Inspirational Ahmad Fathi completes Australian Ultraman Race



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THE first Bruneian to run, swim, cycle and compete at the Australian Ultraman Race 2015 in Noosa, Australia, returned to the Sultanate yesterday saying that he hopes his achievement will be an inspiration to others.

Ahmad Fathi Dato Junaidi (pic) completed another marathon milestone with his time of 27:57:51, ranking 18th out of 37 athletes in the grueling three-day race where two athletes did not finish and one even got knocked down by a car. Australia's David Kalinowski won the event on 21:40:43.

Within 72 hours, Ahmad Fathi swam 10km at sea followed by a 145km cycle ride (day one), 275km cycle ride (day two) and 84.3km double marathon run (day three).

The 33-year-old was the only Bruneian and was one of the four non-Australian athletes participating in the run. The other nationalities were from Canada, Italy and Argentina. Speaking to reporters at the Brunei International Airport yesterday, he shared that his drive to cross the finish line was to see how far he could push himself.

"I've done marathons and a race in the Sahara, so Ultraman Australia was another step I needed to try," he said.

"It has always been my passion to run and challenge myself to the limits, but hopefully doing what I love, can also help to inspire others to do it and show people that anything is possible and achievable as long you put in training, determination, discipline – and your heart into it.

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"As an individual, you always want to go beyond your limit, and I wanted to test how far I can go. *Alhamdulillah* I completed the race and got to compete with top athletes," he added.

Describing his biggest hurdles, he said that swimming was the toughest - although this did not mean that the others were much easier.

"Swimming was very challenging. It was 10km in the ocean and I did not have a lot of training in the sea in Brunei because I do not have a partner - and plus it is quite dangerous," he said.

"The cycle was excruciating as the hills in Australia are quite high. It was really challenging and yet at the same time it was also a really exciting, and I had a great experience," he added.

In his build-up to the race, Ahmad Fathi shared that he started training at 3am most days.

"I'll either be cycling or swimming (at 3am). Usually during lunch time I'll be training in the swimming pool, and on the weekends, I'll allocate about five to six hours on the bike. It is really tough but it prepared me for the race," he explained.

"It is a long distance event so you need nutrition every 20-30 minutes and just keep on eating. Even though after a while you feel sick with all the consumption, that is where your crew comes in," he said.

"They give you food and (you) race again. You don't want to be in a deficit, so I just ate whatever they gave, peanut butter, marmite, vegemite and sandwiches.

"My thanks goes to the crew, these people who volunteered and came from other parts of Australia, even Canada... Came just to volunteer and help me ensure I finish the race. And thanks as well to my family and friends who have been great and always encouraging me," he added.

Looking ahead, he said he has targeted some races but he will take it one step at a time.

Awaiting Ahmad Fathi's return yesterday were his parents, siblings and family members holding up a banner that congratulated the marathon runner's achievement.

Among them were the Minister of Communications, Yang Berhormat Pehin Orang Kaya Hamzah Pahlawan Dato Seri Setia Hj Abdullah Begawan Mudim Dato Paduka Hj Bakar and his spouse.

Ahmad Fathi's first major involvement in a marathon began in 2007 when he emerged first in his group age category at the Laguna Phuket International Marathon in Thailand.

He has since become a multiple marathon runner - stamping his footsteps from Miri, Malaysia to New Zealand, Japan, Morocco and France.

The Brunei Times

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