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StanChart wants to help create marathon spirit in Malaysia

Marathon spirit drives ambition, says StanChart CEO

Eddie Hoo

KUALA LUMPUR: It is the marathon spirit that fascinates Standard Chartered Bank Malaysia Bhd (StanChart) managing director and CEO Osman Tarique Mora. He said StanChart seeks to help create this spirit that drives ambition.

In an email interview on the Standard Chartered KL Marathon 2010 (SCKLM 2010) which will be held on the June 27, Osman said: "The qualities of a good marathon runner — perseverance for excellence, strength, focus and a positive can-do attitude — are exactly the same as the values that we hold close to our hearts and through our actions as an organisation."

SCKLM project manager Rainer Biemans answered our questions on the organisation and operation of the marathon.

Tell us a bit about yourself and your role in the KL Marathon.

Biemans: I am originally from Switzerland, and I have now worked for over 14 years in the sports industry as a project manager in various projects such as Ski Alpine World Cup, World Championship and Euro 2008 in Switzerland and Austria. I've also been blessed with opportunities in previous jobs which helped me gain invaluable experiences in operation and logistics in marathons, triathlons and cycling events.

Due to professional and personal reasons I came to Malaysia 16 months ago. Currently, I am the director of operations in Golazo Sdn Bhd, and am using my knowledge in operations to organise, what I hope would be the best Standard Chartered KL Marathon yet. Together with our partners — Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL), Malaysian Amateur Athletics Union (MAAU) and Federal Territory Amateur Athletics Association (FTAAA), we are on track so far, to a great "Run as One".

Can you tell us about the growth of the KL Marathon since its inception

in 2009 in terms of appeal, participation and prize money?

Biemans: Running is always a popular sport. People run for various reasons. An increasingly health conscious public make this sport even more relevant. Plus, it's one of the easiest of all sports to pick up. On a weekend, you'll find families and friends, groups of people running at parks; it is also popular with the gym-goers and is one of the first exercises they attempt once they get to the fitness centres. There is no doubt that running has become an increasingly popular activity in Malaysia. SCKLM 2009 gave runners a new platform to look forward to, and from the optimistic number of entries received so far — 10 000, we are optimistic with our target of 18 000 runners.

Osman: The SCKLM has helped to promote this culture. The vibes from those preparing for the race is rather infectious. In Singapore and Thailand, the Standard Chartered runs have certainly increased the popularity of running, and given time, I'm sure it will do the same in Malaysia.

Has there been any high-profile participation in the form of established or well-known distance runners in the previous marathons?

Biemans: The SCKLM is a very young race. It's coming into its second year. Our objective is to grow on a solid base and gain the necessary IAAF labels. Normally, it takes years to get a name in the elite running scene. Therefore we have to keep on working hard and bring the SCKLM closer to the established Standard Chartered marathons in Singapore, and Hong Kong.

How do you rate the SCKLM compared to the Singapore and Thailand marathons?

Biemans: SCKLM is a young race with aspirations to reach levels of

other renowned international marathons. We are on a learning curve right now, but we are definitely not too far away from reaching this goal of being at greater heights.

Tell us about the prize money and the kind of field it has attracted. What are the categories of races?

Biemans: The total prize money for SCKLM 2010 is US\$100,000 (RM320,000). The breakdown for the Full Marathon (42.195km) in the open category for male and female runners — first place prize money of US\$17,500, second place prize money of US\$8,000, third place prize money of US\$5,000, fourth place prize money of US\$3,500, and fifth place prize money of US\$1,500.

For the Full Marathon, male and female Malaysian runner stand to make US\$2,500 for first place, US\$2,000 for second place, US\$1,000 for third place, US\$750 for fourth place and US\$500 for fifth place.

There will also be prize money (first to fifth place) available for Half Marathon open category, Full and Half Marathon in the veteran category for both male and female.

The categories of races are complete, considering it takes into account the variety of needs based on age groups. One category is also targeted at PMEBS (professionals, managers, executives and businessmen) through the "Corporate Challenge" which works in line with "Run for a Cause" in collecting funds as a show of support to the named charities of SCKLM 2010.

The five categories in SCKLM 2010 are the Full Marathon (Open and Veteran categories, Male and Female), Half Marathon (Open and Veteran categories, Male and Female), 10km/10km Corporate Challenge (Male and Female), 5km Fun Run and Fun Run Family, and lastly the 3km and 850m Kids Dash.

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What is Standard Chartered's objective in the title sponsorship of this marathon?

Osman: We believe that SCKLM is more than just a race. Our involvement with the marathon is to not only inspire people to lead a healthy and balanced lifestyle, but we also want to help create the marathon spirit — that drives ambition — in the Malaysian community. I like to think that qualities of a good marathon runner — perseverance for excellence, strength, focus and a positive can-do attitude — are exactly the same as the values that we hold close to our hearts and through our actions as an organisation.

What were the best times recorded and by who?

Biemans: Last year, the Malaysian female Full Marathon winner was Yuan Yu Fang with an impressive time of 3'16:35.71. As for the Malaysian male Full Marathon, Muniandi Ramadass clocked the best time at 2'31:52.

As for the Open Full Marathon, both winners hailed from Kenya, with Frieda Jepkite Lodepa finishing at 2'40:13.66 in the female category, and for the male category, Julius Ndiritu Karinga finished at an impressive 2'17:2.95.

What are the fringe activities to draw the crowd at Dataran Merdeka during race day?

Osman: The Bank's Lunch Hour Run was one fringe activity, which proved to be a major success in drawing the public's attention. This was held on April 12, which truly made for an eye-catching live gambit during peak-time lunch hour. Over 50 runners comprising bank staff clad in a unique combination of business and sporting attire ran through the busy streets of Kuala Lumpur's Bukit Bintang as a teaser to the upcoming Standard Chartered KL Marathon 2010.

Biemans: New this year will be a cheerleading contest, both for universities and an overall open category encompassing universities, corporations and other groups. We believe this will add a lot of exciting, colour and noise along the route and will be great encouragement for the runners.

Prior to the event, we have a road show planned which will go out to

various malls, universities, parks, etc drumming up interest in the SCKLM 2010 as well as signing up runners along the way. At Dataran Merdeka itself we will try with co-organiser DBKL to generate a carnival atmosphere with music and entertainment to keep runners and spectators until the end of the event.

Please explain the theme Run for a Cause.

Biemans: Run for a Cause is a platform designed to increase awareness and serves as conscious effort to

raise funds for Malaysian charities which care for those with major illnesses, underprivileged people with disabilities and organisations which serves to preserve Malaysia's natural environment and resources.

The organisations selected to benefit from the funds collected in Run for a Cause shares similar themes and objectives of SCKLM which work towards a healthier, happier Malaysia.

Please elaborate on the charity element in the SCKLM. Who are the benefactors?

Osman: SCKLM provides a powerful platform for ordinary people to feel extraordinary. The event integrates a strong focus on fund-raising, which is in line with Standard Chartered's sustainability efforts in positively enhancing/contributing to the community.

Biemans: Together with Standard Chartered Trust Fund, there are four new charity organisations selected for this year's SCKLM to benefit off funds collected from Run for a Cause and Corporate Challenge segment. They are the Malaysian Association for the Blind, National Cancer Society Malaysia, Yayasan Anak Warisan Alam (YAWA) and Malaysian Aids Foundation.

SCKLM participants who registers for Run for a Cause would need to select the charity they choose to support and pledge to raise a minimum of RM500 from their friends and family. Once the minimum pledged amount is achieved, their entry fee will be waived.

As for the Corporate Challenge, corporations get to register teams with a minimum of three runners. Each runner's fee will be at RM1,050. RM1,000 of this will go to the SCKLM charity/charities selected by the cor-

poration and entitles each runner to the 10km Corporate Challenge race category.

Is there a clinic in the run-up to the marathon?

Biemans: Running clinics are scheduled in the capital and in major cities around Malaysia. The running clinics are conducted as a two-hour lecture style presentation conducted by specialists in the field of sports science and medicine, sports equipment and of course, long distance running.

The running clinics will kick off at the Kuala Lumpur Lake Gardens tomorrow and move on to Ipoh, Penang and Johor Bahru throughout the month of May. It will end in Kuala Lumpur on June 4 at Taman Tasik Titivangsa, Kuala Lumpur. Admission is free, but participants must register on the marathon's official website, www.kl-marathon.com, and placement is on a first-come-first-serve basis.

Logistics could be a nightmare on race day. How difficult is it to coordinate with the various bodies to ensure the smooth running of the marathon?

Biemans: The magnitude of race may seem daunting but given the expertise of our various event partners, we are confident that this year's race will be a successful one. The help of volunteers is also one crucial aspect of making the race a successful one. We are targeting 600 volunteers to help with all aspects of the marathon. This is a definite increase in terms of workforce and with a new organisational team on board, we are optimistic on hitches kept at the bare minimum.



Biemans has 13 years of experience in managing a wide range of sports events.

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Standing from left: Osman, DBKL director-general Datuk Salleh Yusup, Youth and Sports Minister Datuk Ahmad Shabery Cheek, organising committee member Datuk Seri Ibrahim Saat and MAAU president Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim with runners at the launch of the SCKLM 2010 on March 15.
Photo by Bernama