

Headline	Youth aims to raise RM160,000 for MAF by running in Sahara Desert Marathon		
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# Youth aims to raise RM160,000 for MAF by running in Sahara Desert Marathon

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Two years ago, Jeff Lau June Tean, 26, set a record as the youngest Malaysian runner across the Moroccan Sahara Desert by participating in the Marathon des Sables Challenge 2014.

This year, he is taking up a six-day ultra-marathon challenge spanning 251 km of harsh arid terrain in the desert from April 8 to 18 to raise funds for the Malaysian AIDS Foundation (MAF).

Despite injuring his leg in the first marathon, it has not deterred the Red Ribbon Youth Club advocate to undergo another tough challenge especially running under the hot weather with temperatures reaching 50 degrees Celsius in the daytime in support of MAF, he told a press conference, recently.

He aims to raise RM160,000 for MAF, double the amount collected in 2014 for the fund, which was RM80,000.

Entering its 31st edition,

the Marathon des Sables Challenge 2016, which was named by Discovery Channel as the toughest footrace on earth, expects to attract 1,000 top endurance runners and enthusiasts from all over the world.

Lau, who recently graduated from the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology with a Bachelor of Communication Design degree, said he started his physical training three weeks ago to gain stamina.

“Since I’ve been through these challenges and have had a similar experience, I do not want to repeat the same mistakes that had caused me injury. I am now working out at least twice a week.

“I will keep on spreading the word to my peers and other young people about the importance of responsible sexual health behaviour, knowing one’s HIV status and access to early treatment for those who are living with HIV,” he said.

Senior Principal Assistant

Director of HIV/AIDS Sector of Health Ministry Dr Mohd Nasir Abd Aziz said as of September 2015, 41 per cent of people infected with AIDS were between the ages of 13 to 29 years old.

“Most of the cases are caused by sex transmission and the drug injection,” he said.

He said it was estimated that more than half of all new HIV infections occurred before the age of 30 and most were infected through unprotected sexual intercourse.

“Many of these new infections occur because young people don’t have the knowledge or skills to protect themselves.”

“Comprehensive sex education is more effective at preventing the spread of HIV infection by teaching the youth on how to abstain from risky sexual behaviors and to learn how they can protect themselves against HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases,” he said. - Bernama