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Ex-teacher, 66, to tackle desert marathon

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KUALA LUMPUR: At 66, retired teacher Mohamed Adnan Osman, a fan of extreme sports, is as fit as a fiddle. And as proof, he has scaled the country's 12 highest peaks and run 12 full marathons.

And now he is signing up for the gruelling *Marathon des Sables* (Marathon of Sand), dubbed the toughest foot race on earth.

The seven-day 243km race will be in the Sahara Desert in Morocco from March 29 to April 4. Not only must participants run with a backpack filled with necessities, but on one of the days, they will have to run non-stop for 80km within 30 hours.

"I am excited," said Adnan, a father of two sons, after receiving a RM25,000 mock cheque yesterday from Sime Darby director Tan Sri Wan Zahid Noordin, who is also a Sime Darby Foundation council member.

Adnan said he would be taking up the challenge for his own personal achievement and to raise funds for the Malaysian AIDS Foundation.

"I've done a lot of crazy things, and my family has given up on keeping track of my activities," he said.

Adnan said he was determined to make up for not being able to complete his bid to cycle 9,000km from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing last year. He was refused a visa at the Vietnam-China border.

The desert marathon is open to people aged 18 to 78, and each year about 800 people from all over the world – mainly French and British – participate for a trophy, a commemorative



Gruelling task: Wan Mohd Zahid presenting the mock cheque to Mohamed Adnan for the desert race during a ceremony at Wisma Sime Darby in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

T-shirt, a certificate and a 5,000 euro (RM23,000) prize money.

Asked if he would go to a desert to train and acclimatise himself before the competition, Adnan replied "no". He would train on sandy beaches locally in the hot sun.

Although the temperature here is much lower than the 45°C to 48°C in the Sahara Desert, Adnan said that was the best he could do.

Taipung-born Adnan graduated from

Brinsford Lodge Teachers College, England, in 1963 and taught at various schools, including the Royal Military College in Sungai Besi.

However, he is not the first Malaysian to run the desert marathon. Ngae Koh Hieng, a lawyer, and Dr Tan Tah Ming, both in their early 50s, were among the finishers last year.

Anyone who wishes to donate to the Malaysian AIDS Foundation can call April at 03-4045 1033 or 012-2779068.