

SPEECH

By	Rene'e Aziz Ahmad
For	Climb with PRIDE-Aconcagua 2007 Press Conference
Venue	JW Marriott, Kuala Lumpur
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Yang Berbahagia Datin Azrene Abdullah, Chairman of PRIDE Foundation

Ms Ang Kim Sim, Group Financial Controller, Eau Claire Mineral Water

Members of PRIDE Foundation

Other team members of the Climb with PRIDE-Aconcagua expedition – Khairul and Shereen

Members of the media

Ladies and gentlemen

A very good afternoon

Five years ago, I discovered a lump in my left breast and within days my life changed. I spent the next nine months undergoing treatments for breast cancer that included a mastectomy followed by chemotherapy and radiotherapy but the real healing did not begin until more than a year later when I was invited to join some friends on an expedition to climb Mount Kilimanjaro in Africa.

In the twelve months that it took me to train for the climb, I learned to enjoy life again as I began to regain my former strength and at least some of the fitness that I had taken for granted before the cancer struck.

Finally, in January 2005, I was privileged to stand at the top of Mount Kilimanjaro, at 5895m, the highest point in all of Africa. The experience was for me like a rite of passage – I finally felt that I had really survived the breast cancer and gotten my life back together again.

Now, some two years later, I am truly honoured to have been given the opportunity by the PRIDE Foundation to attempt to summit another, more demanding mountain, as Team Leader of the Climb with PRIDE Aconcagua Expedition 2007.

The objective of the PRIDE Foundation in organizing this Expedition is simply to bring a message of hope to all Malaysian women – that surviving breast cancer does not mean you have to stop living life to the fullest or that you cannot take on new and exciting challenges.

In undertaking the Climb with PRIDE Aconcagua Expedition, I will be joined by some very ordinary people who have come together to do an extraordinary thing in support of breast cancer survivors and the need to create greater awareness about this disease.

Ladies and gentlemen, it gives me great pleasure to introduce to you the members of the Team:

- ❖ Khairul Ariffin whom we all know as Kabie and whose friendship and support helped me to successfully summit Mount Kilimanjaro in 2005;
- ❖ Shereen who may look tiny and petite but is hotter than the hottest chilli padi you can imagine;
- ❖ Captain Zabil who is a commercial pilot with Malaysia Airlines and whose wife has just delivered their second baby girl; unfortunately, Zabil cannot join us today due to his work commitment; and finally
- ❖ Harun, award winning filmmaker who will be documenting the Expedition for ASTRO, Official Broadcaster of the Expedition.

Ladies and gentlemen, many people have asked the question, why climb a mountain, and if so, why Aconcagua?

For me, the analogy between fighting breast cancer and climbing a mountain is simple and clear. Never look too far ahead. Take things one step at a time. Remain focused and positive and most of all persevere.

Why Aconcagua? Well, after Mount Kilimanjaro, Aconcagua is the “next step up” so to speak. To begin with, it has the distinction of being the highest mountain in the western and southern hemispheres. At close to 7000m, it is a full 1000m higher than Mount Kilimanjaro. Located in the Central Andes in South America, it is also the highest mountain outside of Asia and the Himalayas, offering the extreme challenge of high altitude expedition-style mountaineering, without the need for technical climbing skills. In addition, the Malaysian government’s call a few years ago to look south also had an influence as did the warmth and generosity of the people of South America and of Argentina in particular.

We chose Aconcagua for all these reasons and more, but primarily, it had to be a challenge worth talking about so that the message of hope to breast cancer survivors as well as patients undergoing treatment and Malaysian women in general, would reach out far and wide.

In the final analysis, it’s not whether we reach the summit that matters the most, and to be frank with all of you here today, there are no guarantees that every Team Member will enjoy equal success on Aconcagua. But surely it is better to have tried and in trying to have experienced the journey, a journey that we hope

will encourage more women to seek early treatment for breast cancer and ultimately inspire other breast cancer survivors to live their dreams.

On that note, I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of the Team Members to thank YBhg. Datin Azrene Abdullah and the PRIDE Foundation, especially project leader Maslina Shamsuddin, for all their hard work in organizing the Climb with PRIDE Aconcagua Expedition. We would also like to thank the sponsors, Eau Claire Mineral Water Sdn Bhd, Air Asia Berhad, PLUS Expressways Berhad, PowerBar, CoreZone and Official Broadcaster ASTRO for making the Expedition possible.

As an employee of PLUS Expressways Berhad, I must also express my sincere gratitude to my management for their understanding and unwavering support in encouraging my participation in this Expedition.

Thanks must go to the Team Members themselves for taking on this challenge with me and to their families for allowing them to do so with an open heart.

And finally, our sincere thanks to you, ladies and gentlemen for taking the time to be with us here today to launch the Climb with PRIDE Aconcagua Expedition 2007.

Thank you.

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