



AFI – IAU PRESS RELEASE

AFI Media
15th July 2019

New Delhi. In early 2017, President AFI, Mr. Adille Sumariwalla expressed the desire of the Indian ultra running community to be associated with the International Association of Ultrarunners (IAU). Mr Nadeem Khan, then the Acting President of the IAU invited Athletics Federation of India (AFI) to join the IAU and on 15 February 2017 the AFI became a member of the IAU. This paved the way for ultra runners from India to participate on the international platform of the IAU and ITRA (International Trail Running Association) at the World and Asia & Oceania Championships in the sport of Ultra and Trail Running.

Since 2017, the AFI has sent Indian ultra and trail runners to represent the country at the Trail World Championships, the 24 Hour World Championships, the 100 Km World Championships and the 24 Hour Asia & Oceania Championships.

It was at the 2018 IAU 24 Hour Asia and Oceania Championships held at Taipei, that India surprised the Ultra running community by winning its first individual and team medal at an international ultra running event. UllasNarayana won the bronze medal covering a distance of 250 Km in 24 Hours and the Indian Team comprising Ullas Narayana, Sunil Sharma and Lallu Meena finished in the third spot.

The sport of Ultra Running and Trail Running has been growing rapidly with at least 50 such ultra running events being organized in the country. A large number of runners are also competitively taking part in

international events such as the Spartathlon, Badwater, La Ultra The High, UTMB and Comrades.

A couple of domestic ultra events are drawing up to 750 participants under different categories. NEB sports has been one of the fore runners to have thrown open the doors to Indian runners to test their limits and push beyond endurance at the Stadium Runs and ultra running events held across the cities of Bengaluru, Delhi, Mumbai and Hyderabad.

Events such as the 48-Hour, 24-Hour, 12-Hour and 100 Km Stadium Runs are races the Indian Running Community looks forward to each year. NEB Sports has also been the active sponsor of Indian teams for the 2017 Trail World Championships; the 24 Hour World Championships held in 2017; the 100 Km World Championships & the 24 Hour Asia and Oceania Championships held in 2018.

For the first time this year, a training camp is to be held in August for top Indian ultra runners. A leading US coach has been invited to guide the athletes. The athletes will also receive valuable inputs from a leading nutritionist and sports physiotherapist. This camp is being organized and funded by passionate members of the Indian running community.

Seeing the growing interest and progress being made in Ultra running, AFI and NEB Sports have invited IAU President Nadeem Khan and Vice President Robert Boyce to consider India as the next destination for holding an International Ultra Running Championship. Thanks to the support of NEB Sports, India has bid for hosting the IAU 24 Hour Asia & Oceania Championships in 2020 and the IAU 100 Km Asia and Oceania Championships in 2021, which is being discussed during this visit.

Adille J Sumariwalla said, "At the outset, I extend my heartiest welcome to IAU President Mr. Nadeem Khan from Canada and Vice-President and Robert Boyce from Australia. This is their first official visit to India and we are very pleased they visited us to take a note of how the sport of Ultra Running is progressing in India. I hope both IAU President and Vice President are satisfied with their visit and will provide us further inputs

in connection to hosting these events and IAU will provide us this opportunity to host International events in India in a year or two.”

Nadeem Khan, the IAU President said, “Ultra running in India is making rapid progress and we are really happy to see that. I am really impressed with this progress in such a short time,”

“I am glad that India joined IAU family only in 2017 and have already made to the podium at the Asia-Oceania 24 Hour Championships at Taipei in 2018. Such results will definitely motivate other Ultra Runners in the country and we expect more such results in coming continental events,”

“We have received India’s bid to organise continental-level events and I think the facilities we visited in Bangalore are really good. The final decision on hosting IAU 24 Hour Asia & Oceania Championships in 2020 and the IAU 100 Km Asia and Oceania Championships in 2021 in India will be taken by IAU council,” said IAU President.

Till about 2015 - 16, Indian ultra runners appeared to be content in completing an ultra running event and only a few competed at International races. Today however, both women and men are getting to be faster and running longer distances, steadily rewriting national records and moving to place the Indian Flag on the International Ultra and Trail Running map.

To recognize the achievements of the top Indian ultra and trail runners, well wishers of Indian distance running have instituted an annual Ultra & Trail Running Award for the best among the women and men. The awardees have been selected after due diligence by the Ultra & Trail Running Committee of the AFI, and will be announced at the Press Conference on 15 July 2019 by the President of AFI, Mr Adille Sumariwalla.

