

# P Venkatraman: An inspiration to marathon runners

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FIFTY TWO-YEAR-OLD P Venkatraman has been running marathons ever since they first started. The only hindrance he faced was when he had to undergo a bypass surgery in 2007.

He was the first heart patient to run a 21-km half marathon and is now a source of inspiration to two other marathoners who have registered for the same after operations. For many, the marathon imbibes in them a new spirit to run post-opera-

tion but for him it was the other way round -- the marathon helped him detect his condition.

"In November 2006 when I was practicing for a marathon, I had angina pain and felt a pull in my heart muscle. When tests were carried out, it was revealed that I had a 100 per cent blockage. Luckily, I did not suffer a heart attack," said P Venkatraman, executive director of a BPO.

Many were inspired by him when he ran in a crowd of comparatively young runners in their late 20s.

"I did the dream run last year, but was really inspired by Venkatraman — by the way he prepared for the half marathon and also completed it. He asked me to join the training group for this year's marathon and doctors encouraged me a lot," said S P Eshwar, 52, CEO of a logistics firm. Eshwar underwent an angioplasty in 2005.

"I have a history of the disease in the family. My father had it and I lost my younger brother at the age of 32 due to a fatal first heart attack. Knowing this, I have always been

careful about my health habits and diet, and have been running marathons as part of my overall fitness regime," recalls Venkatraman, also a moderator of the Cardiac Support Group at the Asian Heart Institute (AHI).

Along with Venkatraman, there are two other heart patients who are running half marathons this year and 10 others for the 6 km dream run from the Asian Heart Hospital.

"There is a huge difference between running a half marathon and the

dream run but it is very important to listen to the body and in case of any pain, especially chest pain, one has to take proper care," said Asian Heart Hospital Cardiac Rehabilitation Center Head Ashish Contractor.

"It is very important to run for a cause and I strongly believe that surgery does not cripple one for life. In fact, it improves one's ability to run," pointed out Venkatraman. And for those who are preparing for a marathon, this old man has only one piece of advice — "run by heart".