

'Turbaned Tornado' hangs his boots at 101

Hong Kong: A 101-year-old Sikh believed to be the world's oldest distance runner retired Sunday after ending his last race in Hong Kong on a high, describing it as one of the "happiest days" of his long life.

Fauja Singh, nicknamed

THE LAST LEG

the "Turbaned Tornado", finished the 10-kilometre (6 mile) run at the Hong Kong Marathon in one hour, 32 minutes and 28 seconds – half a minute faster than at the same event last year.

"Today is one of my happiest days," the Indian-born British national, who only

speaks Punjabi, said through his interpreter after he crossed the finishing line with a broad smile and waving the Hong Kong flag.

"I felt so fresh and so good. I felt I'm full of power today.

"I will remember this day and I will miss it, but I will not stop running for charity," added Singh, who was mobbed by supporters when he completed his final competitive event.

The centenarian, who was a farmer in his home state of Punjab before settling in England, began running at 89 and has since completed nine 42-kilometre (26 mile) marathons in London, Toronto and New York. His best time was in To-



Fauja Singh (centre) after crossing the finish line in the 10-km event of the Hong Kong Marathon on Sunday

ronto, where he clocked five hours, 40 minutes and four sec-

onds. The great-great-grandfather, who turns 102 on April 1,

has said that while he is quitting competitive events, he will not stop running for personal fitness.

He was inspired to take up marathons after he saw television coverage of one 12 years ago, not long after the death of his wife and a son, at a time when he said he needed a new focus in life.

Although widely regarded as the world's oldest marathon runner, Guinness World Records has not certified him since Singh cannot prove his birth date.

He has said there were no birth certificates available when he was born under British colonial rule. AFP