

Runway of joy!

The air was electric and the feeling euphoric as everyone from ANIL AMBANI to JOHN ABRAHAM took the start line at the Mumbai Marathon

Ismat Tahseen

t_ismat@dnaindia.net

THE dark night still hadn't relinquished its custody of the skies to the sun but the throbbing pulse of the gathered 30,000 men, women and children was ready and waiting for that rush to glory. Professional athletes, film stars, business tycoons — even the Air India Maharaj and Spiderman thrown in for good measure — joined the average Mumbaikar in probably the biggest non-religious community event in the city's calendar.

With a total of total of 54 teams from 34 countries competing this year, there were also a heartening number of social workers and NGO's supporting a variety of causes from awareness for the disabled, to animal rights, nature conservation and even world peace.

John Abraham, who took part in the Dream run, said he was thrilled to represent five causes with a single effort. "It's a matter of honour

to be here. It shows that we in Mumbai are a resilient lot and that we all stand united," he said.

Asked if he specially trained for the event, he shrugged, "What training does one need for a six km race? I can do it easily, even 10-12 km is normal. But I got goose bumps looking at the 42 km runners. Maybe I'll do the 21 or 42 km next year," he said wistfully.

Bipasha Basu was there too to lend support to her boyfriend. "We were here since six am and it's so exciting. Just look around, there's so much togetherness here," she gushed excitedly. The actress herself did not take part in the

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— Bipasha Basu

Prashant Jadhav



(Left) Anil Ambani sets the pace. (Above) John with Bipasha — Satej Shinde

run. "Unfortunately my knees are busted and I have been advised not to participate," she said. "I just wish I could change the fact that the city's roads are so bad, there are so many potholes. Running on these roads is not a good idea for me."

Anil Ambani, was among the first to arrive with his trainers was raring to have his go at the

half marathon, that 21 km test of endurance. As the euphoria and fanfare climaxed, a hostess on the stage shrieked, "Mumbai are you ready?" and a roar resonated from the participants. Mayor Shubha Raul flagged off the marathon, Congress MP Priya Dutt flagged of the wheelchair event while Arshad Warsi, Tina Ambani and Shabana Azmi signalled the start of the Senior Citizen's Run.

Any favourites? "Yes," said Bipasha. "I want Spiderman to win."