

04/08/1997

19 light airplanes take off in batches

IPOH, Sun. - Nineteen light airplanes participating in the inaugural Great Malaysian Air Rally 1997 took to the "hazy skies" today as they flew towards Alor Star in three batches.

The airplanes could not take off for the third stage of the rally yesterday as scheduled because of the worsening haze.

Initially, 20 airplanes were supposed to take off but one, a glider, turned back because it could not fly owing to light breeze.

A spokesman from the Department of Civil Aviation said the first batch of 15 airplanes took off at 9.30am when visibility was at its clearest at 10,000 metres.

Two more airplanes took off at 10am and the last two took off 30 minutes later. The glider is expected to take off tomorrow.

The DCA spokesman said the planes had to take off before noon as there were fears that visibility could be reduced to between 1,000 and 2,000 metres by late afternoon.

Later today, some of the airplanes landed at the Sultan Abdul Halim Airport at Kepala Batas in Alor Star.

The rally was flagged off by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad at the Royal Malaysian Air Force air station in Sungai Besi last Monday.

The air rally is a prelude to the Langkawi Fly-In 1997, dubbed Asia's first flying convention and exhibition from Aug 4-8, involving manufacturers and pilots of light and ultra-light aircraft.

(END)