

07/12/1997

Dr Mahathir proves an apt skipper at sea

Saiful Azhar Abdullah; Sharanjit Singh

TAKING over the helm of a sailboat, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad proved an apt skipper when he led his "team" to second place in a celebrity race at Tanjung Malai off Langkawi yesterday.

The race was part of the inaugural Malaysia Challenge 1997 International Sailing Grand Prix held as part of the Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace exhibition.

Among the competitors was Vice Admiral (rtd) Tan Sri Abdul Wahab Nawi, the executive chairman of Huswah Exhibition Sdn Bhd - the main organiser of the Malaysia Challenge.

Wearing a green life jacket and barefooted, the Prime Minister took over the helm of America One.

On board were John Kostecki, the skipper of America One - which qualified for the finals - Don Cowie and Alan Smith.

Abdul Wahab sailed with the Nippon Challenge team from Japan. Fighting for third place, it was led by world champion Peter Gilmour.

The race, held on a clear day with blue skies and wind conditions ideal for sailing, got off to an exciting start with Dr Mahathir leading the pack.

Dr Mahathir's team was on its way to victory until Abdul Wahab's boat caught up and won the race.

Business Focus executive chairman Datuk Amin Shah Omar Shah, who co-sponsored the event, presented the trophies.

The ceremony was held on board the Sultan of Brunei's Bolkiah 1 luxury boat.

On his experience, Dr Mahathir said in jest: "I don't know how I managed to stay on my feet. I had to keep moving from one place to another.

"Well, I think it's a good sport. It really develops your leg muscles because you have to move around on a very unstable platform."

Dr Mahathir said Tanjung Malai is an ideal place for sailing.

"I think it is ideal ... all the sailors told me this is the perfect place for sailing. Today is also a perfect day, nice breeze, nice cool wind and clear skies and no haze."

As the race progressed, live bands entertained the crowd on the boardwalk of the Awana Resort Hotel by playing pop songs and Asli tunes.

(END)