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Great Malaysia Air Rally gets off to a flying start

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KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - The first Great Malaysia Air Rally took off with 20 light aircraft participating in the seven-day race which would take them across the peninsula before arriving in Langkawi for the opening of the Langkawi Oshkosh East Fly-In convention and exhibition on Aug 4.

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

Also present were Youth and Sports Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, RMAF chief Lt Jen Datuk Seri Ahmad Saroji Che Rose and Le Proton Lima Sdn Bhd chairman Datuk Radzi Manan.

Both events are organised by Le Proton Lima, better known for organising the biennial Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace Exhibition.

Among the aircraft taking part are three of Malaysia's very own light airplanes.

They are the MD-3 "Aero Tiga", manufactured by SME Aviation Sdn Bhd, Composite Technology Research Malaysia's "Eagle 150" and the Rakan Muda Malaysian Experimental Aircraft, the "Zodiac 601HD".

There are also 11 participants from Australia, South Africa, Singapore and Italy.

Among other light aircraft taking part in the rally are a German warbird replica - Storch, Cessna 172, Cessna 182, Piper Chieftain and Piper Cub.

The race has been divided into two sectors, for the light aircraft and the ultra-lights.

The first leg for the light aircraft will take the group to Kuala Terengganu to participate in an air carnival organised by the Terengganu State Government in conjunction with Visit Terengganu Year 1997.

The ultra-light group, meanwhile will head for Batu Berendam, Malacca.

On Aug 1, the first group will fly across the mountain range from Kuala Terengganu to Ipoh for a night stop where they will join up with the ultra-lights, before continuing their journey north to Alor Star on Aug 2.

The ultra-lights will fly from Alor Star to Kuala Perlis to participate in a microlight carnival at the Sungai Batu Pahat microlight park.

On Aug 4, all the aircraft will fly to Langkawi to converge for the Fly-In, to be held near the Langkawi International Airport at Padang Mat Sirat.

Radzi said about 150 light aircraft will participate in the show, which is Asia's first fly-in convention and exhibition.

Meanwhile, Malaysian Experimental Aircraft Association secretary Mej (Rtd) Razak Omar said the first Rakan Muda Malaysian Experimental Aircraft, 9M-ERM took about six-months to be completed.

He said the aircraft was worth about RM70,000 and is gas-powered. It has a cruising speed of 90 knots and has an endurance of five hours.

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