

04/08/1997

## Hobbyist sets model plane flying record

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LANGKAWI, Sun. - The feat by Malaysian champion Mahamad Yusuf Hassan in flying a model plane non-stop for 37km by remote control from a speed boat from Penang to Pulau Bidan today will go down in the Malaysia Book of Records.

The 51-year-old hobby centre owner from Alor Star, who was attempting a world record from Penang to here over a distance of 90km, had to give up at Pulau Bidan after one hour eight minutes, but nevertheless carved his name as a record holder.

On arrival here, Mahamad Yusuf, who took up the hobby 20 years ago, said he failed to get the plane up from the sea when he landed it to refuel due to bad weather and hazy conditions.

With his plane hovering at 100km and the boat he was on moving at one third the speed, he found it difficult to radio operate the plane all the way from Penang, similar to the unsuccessful attempt during a trial two days ago.

Mahamad Yusuf, who aspires to fly his model plane over the 1,000 km of sea from Singapore to here in the not too distant future, was flagged off in Penang by Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon. He was accompanied on the marine police boat by two officials from the Malaysia Book of Records.

The event was organised by Le Proton Lima Sdn Bhd to usher in the five-day inaugural Langkawi Oshkosh East Fly-In convention and exhibition to be opened by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad tomorrow morning.

Mahamad Yusuf had in 1995 successfully radio controlled a model plane non-stop from Kuala Perlis to Tanjung Rhu here in 54 minutes. He covered a distance of 43 km but no attempt was made to include the feat in the Malaysia Book of Records.

According to him, the world record is claimed by a European who crossed the English Channel with a distance of 27km.

"If this is so, my trip from Kuala Perlis to Tanjung Rhu should be considered a world record," he said.

"Whatever it is, it shows that Malaysians can strive for feats if they set their minds on it."

Malaysia Book of Records official Danny Ooi said Yusuf's first trip could be considered as a record if proper documents were furnished. He said today's feat would be the official record pending ratification of the earlier journey.

Mahamad Yusuf will have a better way to radio control a model plane from Penang to here, this time from a Cessna aircraft.

Le Proton executive chairman Datuk Radzi Manan said it will be organised during Lima '97 at the end of the year.

He said during the flagging off, Koh had suggested it would be better to attempt the record from a Cessna which had a faster speed than a boat which was slower than even the model plane and thereby posed problems.

While waiting for Mahamad Yusuf to arrive, Japanese, Singaporean and Malaysian aeromodelling enthusiasts displayed their skills on the jetty waterfront. Among them was world champion G. Naruke.

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