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Sailor

MALAYSIAN SAILOR GETS READY FOR SOLO SAIL AROUND WORLD

MELBOURNE, Sept 1 (Bernama) -- Former Malaysian merchant seaman Azhar Mansor will set sail solo from Australia next week, arriving in Malaysia early next month, as a lead-up for an epic Langkawi-to-Langkawi solo effort in December.

He will be the first Malaysian to sail single-handed and non-stop around the world and will be the first to attempt a new course, starting and finishing in the Indian Ocean, while making a long loop northwards to Recife in Brazil to complete the 21,600 nautical miles required by the World Speed Sailing Record Council as a circumnavigation.

It will give Azhar an excellent opportunity to set a new Open 50 record, using the advantages of wind and tidal currents offered by the new course.

Azhar will sail in a new boat, the Jalur Gemilang, which was launched in Newcastle, north of Sydney, yesterday and witnessed by Malaysian High Commissioner Datuk Adnan Othman and a large crowd, including 20 Malaysians from Sydney and Canberra.

For Azhar, the challenge began two years ago when he decided to realise his dream of sailing solo around the world.

"Many people need to achieve something at 40. I am 40 now, and it is time for me to do something," he told Bernama today.

"I love the peace, the sea, and being far away from the rat race."

Without the personal wealth for a daring venture, he wrote to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, explaining the project and asking for his blessing and support, which, after some consideration, was given wholeheartedly.

Azhar also contacted Lee Condell in Sydney, whom he had met some years ago, and asked him to act as project manager.

Initially, the intention was to buy a secondhand boat, but as the likely boats -- True Blue, Newcastle Challenge, Thursday's Child and Aqua Quorum -- were all sold before sufficient funds were available, it became clear that they would need to have a new yacht built.

Sufficient funds were raised to commission a design from Scott Jutson of Sydney and in August last year, the first frames were laid up at McConaghy's yard in Mona Vale, near Sydney. Twelve months later, the completed yacht was launched at Palm Beach.

In the past fortnight, Jalur Gemilang has been rigged and sea trialled.

The majority of the labour, materials and equipment on board were sourced in Australia, three notable exceptions being the clothing, which was supplied by Dornon of New Zealand, marine coatings by Awlcraft Singapore and the Nera SatCom system by Sapura of Malaysia.

In December Azhar will set off from Langkawi for a voyage of adventure and hardship.

The yacht, Jalur Gemilang (literally "Stripes of Glory", a reference to the Malaysian flag) is an impressive sight, and is a great affirmation of one man's determination, and the belief vested in him by his financial contributors and all those associated with the project.

-- BERNAMA

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