

21 APR 1998

Pole-Jump

MALAYSIAN SKY DIVERS LANDED ON NORTH POLE

KUALA LUMPUR, April 21 (Bernama) -- Sixteen Malaysian sky divers landed on the North Pole early today, adding another page to the country's achievements.

Besides planting the national colours "Jalur Gemilang", the members of the North Pole Free Fall Expedition also succeeded in landing a Proton Wira 1.5 during the jump from almost 3,000 metres.

According to the expedition secretariat, the group led Abdul Rahim Dahalan made the successful landing on the North Pole at about 1.50am.

Malaysia is the first country in Asia to have organised an expedition to the North Pole which had seen visits by American, German, Canadian, Russian, Italian and British expedition teams.

When told of the success, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad congratulated the team which also included a mother of five.

Dr Mahathir said many people had criticised the expedition as they felt it was inappropriate to have one during the time of economic downturn.

"But I feel...the adventure might be dangerous and we might seem to be taking our economic problem lightly but it bolsters our spirit and this is what we should do under whatever condition the country is in," he told a news conference after launching the Malaysian-British Business Council here.

Dr Mahathir had launched the expedition on March 29 and presented the national colours to Abdul Rahim.

According to the expedition secretariat, the jump took almost half an hour and the team stayed at the North Pole for two hours.

Besides Abdul Rahim, other expedition members are Kapten (B) Abdul Rahmat Omar, Lt Ahmad Ramli Kardi, Mej Kamaruddin Abdullah, Puan Nordziah Mohamed Noor and Mohamed Shamsul Mohamed Amin, the youngest in the team at 21 years old.

The others are Lt (B) Aziz Ahmad as lead jumper, Mej Amran Abdul Rashid, Sulaiman Alwee, Ahmed Abdul Rahman, Maznan Mat Isa, Mohamed Idros Yusop, Mohd Hazamuzakar Mohd Hatim, Ramlee Alias, Ramli Mat Idin and Mohd Noorizan Yunus.

A TV3 team was also at the North Pole to record the historic event.

According to the secretariat, the temperature was 41 degrees Celsius below zero during the jump and 25 degrees Celsius below zero on the surface.

"As Malaysians we feel proud that we finally made it to the North Pole," said Abdul Rahmat.

Thanking the Almighty for the successful venture, Rahmat said expedition members also created a new record in formation jump using five parachutes.

On the Proton Wira, Rahmat said they had no problem starting the car even under extremely cold weather condition of the North Pole.

But, he said they could not drive the car due to the thick snow and the snow storm which came soon after their arrival.

"But Abdul Rahim managed to drive the car around the freezing airport near the North Pole," he said.

The team comprising army personnel and businessmen left for Khantangga in Siberia at 4pm local time.

An officer at the secretariat, Mej (B) Abdul Shukor Nasiruddin contacted tonight said the team was expected to return to Malaysia on

Sunday.

-- BERNAMA

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