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Azhar-Mariner

AZHAR PROGRESSES CLOSER TO CAPE HORN

LANGKAWI, April 9 (Bernama) -- Malaysian mariner Azhar Mansor progressed closer to Cape Horn today, his spirits bolstered by words of encouragement from Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad who singled him out for mention yesterday.

The prime minister, who is recovering from lung infection at the National Heart Institute, had said that he was deeply touched by the get-well message received via the Internet from the sailor and hoped that Azhar, who is out to sail round the world solo non-stop on a new west-east route, would succeed.

Dr Mahathir is the patron of the Jalur Gemilang challenge under which the attempt is being made.

On Feb 2, Dr Mahathir flagged off Azhar on the historic attempt from Langkawi and pledged that the government would support him.

In his e-mail last Wednesday, Azhar prayed for Dr Mahathir's good health and fast recovery.

Noel Belman, the project's adviser and communications officer at the Awana Porto Malai resort, here, said he passed on the message to Azhar after being told about Dr Mahathir's goodwill greeting to him.

In his latest update, Azhar said he felt excited as he got closer to Cape Horn which would qualify him to join an international elite club of sailors who have single-handedly passed the Cape with their yachts.

Belman said the club was an informal organisation of sailors who had rounded Cape Horn and they were entitled to wear a gold earring on either their left or right ear lobe, depending on which route they chose to bypass the Cape.

"It is something like a recognition as sailing past Cape Horn is considered the "Everest of Sailing", something like scaling Mount Everest," he added.

Azhar said that rounding the Cape was the ultimate for a sailor and "I then will be a Cape Horner who is qualified to join an international club based in... have to confirm on this, I forgot."

Into his 66th day at sea, Azhar has logged 10,241 nautical miles with some 13,330 nautical miles to go.

He reported his yacht's position at Latitude 53 degrees 18' 96" South, Longitude 099 degrees 02' 50" West with an average speed of 7 knots.

Azhar is out to set two world circumnavigation records of non-stop solo circumnavigation of the world on a new west-east route verified by the World Sailing Speed record Council in Britain, and the fastest non-stop solo circumnavigation for 15m/18m yacht.

-- BERNAMA

NH JK