

26 MAY 1999

Mahathir-Hercules

DR MAHATHIR CONGRATULATES RMAF CREW ON SUCCESSFUL FALKLANDS MISSION

KUALA LUMPUR, May 26 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today congratulated the commander and crew of the C130 Royal Malaysian Air Force (RMAF) Hercules transport plane for flying a 22-metre long mast to Azhar Mansor's yacht, Jalur Gemilang, in the Falklands.

The Prime Minister highly commended them in a letter to the Subang RMAF Squadron Commanding Officer Lt Kol Fadhil Sheikh Ahma who led the mission.

Dr Mahathir said the RMAF's effort to help the Jalur Gemilang by flying the yacht mast from Australia to the Falklands to enable mariner Azhar Mansor to sail back home was indeed very courageous.

"The Hercules C130 round the world flight via the Southern Route, seldom taken by others, but which the RMAF plane took under your command is indeed a record for this type of aircraft," he told Lt Kol Fadhil in the letter.

"Your commitment and the spirit displayed by the crew of the C130 is a matter of great pride," the Prime Minister said.

"Your determination and high resilience is the type of spirit I hope for in every Malaysian."

"If we have the will and do something with full commitment we are bound to succeed and this will and determination have been amply displayed by the crew of the C130 and also by Azhar Mansor in his zeal to circumnavigate the world all alone in his yacht."

The Hercules with its 17-member crew and 10 representatives of the media arrived at the RMAF base in Subang yesterday from Dubai, after a round the world flight.

The plane left Kuala Lumpur on May 8 to fly the RM150,000 mast from Brisbane, Australia, to the Falklands with stopovers in Darwin (Australia), Fiji, Tahiti, Isla de Pascua (Easter Island) and Santiago. It landed in the Falklands on May 12.

On its return flight it passed Comodoro Rivadaria (Argentina), Porto Alegre, Recife in Brazil and Accra, Ghana.

The plane had to wait six days in Accra for clearance to fly over Brazzaville dan Kinshasa.

It created history as it was the first round the world flight by an RMAF Hercules covering more than 45,000 kilometres and clocking some 90 hours.

The Hercules also notched another record in RMAF history when it crossed the Atlantic from Recife, Brazil to Accra, Ghana in nine hours on May 17.

-- BERNAMA

RZS AAM