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Dr M: Azhar can be good role model for youths

ALOR STAR, Sun. - The country needs more youths with the attitude and determination like those of mariner Datuk Azhar Mansor who is circumnavigating the globe solo on a new East-West route, the Prime Minister said today.

Azhar could be a good role model for youths because he was determined to accomplish something that was very difficult and dangerous, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

"It is not easy to sail alone in conditions where the waves sometimes go up to 2.5 metres high in some places, like near Cape Horn," he told a Press conference at the Sultan Abdul Halim Airport in Kepala Batas here at the end of his three-day visit to Kedah.

Azhar's dream of beating the world record for sailing solo non-stop round the world was dashed when the mast of his six-metre yacht, the Jalur Gemilang, snapped into three near Cape Horn on April 12.

Azhar had braved the sea for 69 days and reached the halfway mark of his 26,100 nautical mile journey when the incident occurred.

The 41-year-old sailor, who can thank Dr Mahathir and various corporate bodies for sponsoring his journey, is now on a quest to become the first Malaysian to sail alone round the globe.

Dr Mahathir, who is also the project patron, said Azhar had called him when the mast broke.

"Azhar asked if he should continue the journey," Dr Mahathir said. "I told him if he was willing, I wanted him to continue and he agreed."

After that Azhar continued the journey by using a makeshift sail.

Dr Mahathir said Azhar was only able to make very slow progress, sailing at a speed of three to four knots per hour.

"This is the kind of youth we want in the country... not people who like to lepak or the kind who go around kicking cars. Some may think this is brave but they are actually cowards.

"But what Azhar is doing by going alone to sail round the world is actually a brave act."

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