

01 DEC 1999

Azhar-Captain

MAHATHIR PRESENTS AZHAR WITH NAVY'S HONORARY CAPTAINSHIP

LANGKAWI, Dec 1 (Bernama) -- Celebrity and record-setting mariner Datuk Azhar Mansor was made honorary Captain of the Royal Malaysian Navy (RMN) tonight for his sea-faring achievement.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad presented Azhar the rank at a dinner in conjunction with the 1999 Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace (Lima '99) exhibition here.

Dr Mahathir opened the show earlier today.

Azhar was awarded the rank in a special commission by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah who is Supreme Commander of the Defence Forces.

Azhar, 41, is the first person to circumnavigate the globe solo using a new East-West-East route and this was certified by the London-based World Speed Sailing Record Council (WSSRC) recently.

Last May 18, on the occasion of his highness' birthday, the Raja of Perlis bestowed Azhar with a Datukship in recognition of his feat.

The Perlis-born sailor set sailed from Langkawi on Feb 2 and returned here on Aug 11 after sailing 25,000 nautical miles over 190 days.

The main mast of his ocean-racer broke into three when he sailed into a hailstorm in the notorious Southern Ocean forcing him to take shelter in the Falklands for 30 days.

Azhar continued his journey on May 26 after receiving a new mast which was flown by the Royal Malaysian Air Force (RMAF) in a special mission on May 13.

-- BERNAMA

NH/GM RYN