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Sailing-Azhar

SAILOR AZHAR ALL SET TO CIRCLE THE GLOBE

By: Noor Hammad Wariman

LANGKAWI, Jan 29 (Bernama) -- Local sailor Azhar Mansor, who is attempting to become the first Malaysian to sail solo non-stop round the world in a wind-powered yacht, is ready to begin his arduous trip this Tuesday.

When met today, Azhar, 40, said all preparations have been done to ensure that his departure will run smoothly.

Azhar has also received the necessary accreditation from the World Sailing Speed Record Council (WSRC), which will be monitoring his sailing.

Azhar, who hails from Perlis, said he will begin his journey at about 3.30 pm after the launching ceremony by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad at the Awana Porto Malai Resort in Tanjung Malai here.

"I am extremely excited with this attempt where many people have also expressed their support for my effort to sail solo circling the globe, and hope that people will always support and pray for me throughout the journey," he said.

Azhar will follow a new route covering 21,600 nautical miles, which was verified by the England-based WSRC, in his bid to break the record held by a Frenchman who performed a similar feat in 105 days.

On Oct 25 last year, he had successfully sailed his RM1.8 million yacht on a 10,000 km journey from Sydney, Australia where it was built, to Port Klang where he docked -- a record by itself.

Jalur Gemilang, a handsome 50 ft. single-handed high performance ocean racer, was custom designed by world renowned yacht designer Scott Jutson.

Azhar believes this is the first time an attempt to sail solo non-stop round the world begins at the Indian Ocean where Langkawi is situated. Previous attempts by Westerners usually begin at the Atlantic Ocean.

Azhar said he has several plans in mind after this sailing trip, such as opening a sailing gallery in Kuala Lumpur to display every facet of his history in the making attempt.

He said he plans to record most of his attempt as the gallery was a life long ambition since he was 18 years old.

Azhar brought his RM1.8 million yacht here on Nov 4 last year, and it is berthed at the Awana Porto Malai Resort berthing point where he will begin his adventure.

The preparation for this attempt has been going on for two-years.

Azhar said he has arranged for the setting up of a communication centre ecah in Kuala Lumpur and Langkawi, with the help of Sapura Holdings, one of his sponsors, to enable the public to track his entire journey via the Internet as his yacht is well equipped with fax, e-mail and telex facilities.

Asked where he thinks will be the most danger part of his journey, Azhar said it will be at the Cape Horn point in South America where two major oceans

-- Pacific and Atlantic -- meet. The waters there can be rough with enormous waves.

-- BERNAMA

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