

14 JULY 2001

Mahathir-Expedition

DR MAHATHIR FLAGS OFF ASEAN VOYAGE OF FRIENDSHIP EXPEDITION

KUALA LUMPUR, July 14 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad flagged off the Asean Voyage of Friendship Expedition in conjunction with the Kuala Lumpur Sea Games, at the Royal Malaysian Air Force (RMAF) base here today.

The expedition, which includes two Zodiac, one Eagle aircraft and two helicopters, will fly to all the capitals of the other nine Asean countries to deliver the official invitation for them to participate in the 21st SEA Games in September. All aircraft used are Malaysian-made.

The July 15-Aug 31 expedition involves pilots, student pilots, engineers, technicians, medical personnel, logistics personnel and members of the media as well as 19 youths from the Rakan Muda programme.

All participants are volunteers.

Dr Mahathir also launched the first portion of what is envisaged to be the longest banner in the world, expected to be 15km in length, at the RMAF base.

He was accompanied by his wife, Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali, and several cabinet ministers.

During the expedition, Special Malaysian envoys will hand over a banner to be completed by each Asean member country which will then be sewn together to form the 15-km banner in an effort to beat the current Guinness Book of Record achievement of 10.15km held by India.

The Asean Voyage of Friendship has eight objectives and they are:

- to instill the spirit of volunteerism among Malaysians;
- to expose Malaysians to such daring ventures;
- to promote Malaysian-made aircraft;
- to possibly establish the route for the proposed Asean Air Race;
- to generate publicity for the 21st Sea Games;
- to extend invitations to member countries;
- to highlight Malaysia's attractive tourism potential; and
- for Malaysian states, which the entourage passes, to take full advantage of this mission and promote their tourism potential.

Earlier today, a support event dubbed the "Asean Voyage of Friendship Carnival" was held, also at the RMAF base.

Despite the morning downpour, Malaysians came out in droves not only for the carnival but also to have a first-hand look at the aircraft participating in the voyage.

The carnival included street soccer and three-on-three basketball competitions, skateboarding, a static display of RMAF aircraft, remote control air show, air joy rides for visitors and a show by drivers from Perodua ERA.

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