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PM launches Azhar's Ocean Wild

M. Jeffri Razali

LANGKAWI, Thurs. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today launched Datuk Azhar Mansur's book, Ocean Wild, which chronicles his voyage around the globe.

Dr Mahathir was at the Awana Porto Malai to witness Azhar autographing the book, published and distributed by the New Straits Times Press (M) Bhd.

Azhar handed the autographed copy to the Prime Minister, who was the source of aspiration for Azhar to sail around the globe.

Also present at the launch were New Straits Times group editor Datuk Ahmad A. Talib and H.W. Lima Sdn Bhd executive chairman Tan Sri Abdul Wahab Nawi.

The launch was also witnessed by top officials of defence companies who were there earlier for the signing of 10 memoranda of understanding and agreement (See reports on Lima 2001 on pages 6 and 7).

In his foreword in Ocean Wild, Ahmad said the book showcased self-belief and the willingness to challenge oneself even when failure seemed to be a likely outcome.

He said although two years had passed since Azhar completed his 190-day voyage, Malaysians still remember the feat.

He said it had also inspired people to believe that, in their own personal voyages, they too could overcome the challenges they might face.

"We at the New Straits Times wanted to capture and celebrate this spirit in the book that would document the story of the Jalur Gemilang Challenge.

"The inherent difficulty in putting this book together was to start from scratch with so few resources. Azhar was on his own with no one to aid him across the ocean, much less to record the events that filled his days and sometimes sleepless nights."

Azhar's epic voyage around the globe began in February 1998 and ended at the Awana Porto Malai jetty on Aug 11, 1998.

Throughout his journey, thousands had e-mailed messages of support and he was given a hero's welcome on his return by thousands who turned up at Awana Porto Malai.

Ahmad said Ocean Wild was a collaborative effort by a team from the news desks of the New Straits Times and Berita Harian, the photography department and Studio 31.

He said they were given the task of piecing together a story that largely unfolded with no witnesses in the solitude of the open seas.

"They studied Azhar's daily log, evaluated hours of his video footage, sifted through thousands of news photographs and e-mails.

"They had also followed Azhar for a period of time after his return, coaxing facts and memories out of a man who is reticent by nature."

Ahmad said Azhar had in the book revealed for the first time that the difficulties he faced started long before he even made it to the sea and while on the journey, each day brought its own trials and tribulations.

"I hope this book will serve as an inspiration to Malaysians, particularly the youth who live in an increasingly complex world.

"When traditional values and ideas are being challenged by technology and current events, it may help to simply remember to believe in yourself always, as Azhar did."

Those wanting to buy Ocean Wild, which is priced at RM49.90, can contact Anselm de Rosario at 03-22823322 at ext 3311 or Ibrahim Tamari at ext

3312.