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What kept sailor Azhar going

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - Sheer dedication, focus and a dose of P. Ramlee tunes helped record-breaking sailor Datuk Azhar Mansor survive the 190-day journey around the world alone.

At a luncheon to share his experiences and talk through a video presentation of his voyage, he revealed the many problems and challenges faced.

It was hosted by the Kuala Lumpur Tourist Association.

He started his voyage on the boat Jalur Gemilang in Feb 2, 1999 and ended at the Awana Porto Malai jetty in Langkawi on Aug 11, the same year.

Under harsh weather conditions, especially in the Southern Ocean, Azhar said he had to deal with mountainous waves, strong winds and freezing temperatures.

Azhar said there were also times he had to deal with "no-wind" days, where the boat would be stranded in still waters.

"To keep mentally focused and to make sure I did not hallucinate, I would just keep my mind as simple as possible. Sometimes I would sing some P. Ramlee songs or make up my own optimistic lyrics," he said.

The greatest challenges faced were physical ones as when the mast had collapsed in the Southern Ocean.

"However, there was never a time when I entertained the idea of giving up.

"I had to focus on what I was doing and achieving my target," he said.

At the function, Azhar autographed several copies of Ocean Wild: The Jalur Gemilang Challenge, detailing his 190-day voyage.

It also provides an account of the 40,000km journey with pictures, graphics and maps.

It also contains supportive e-mail messages received from well-wishers throughout the voyage.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad launched the book during the Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace exhibition on Oct 11.

It can be bought in 18 bookshops in the Klang Valley, and is also being sold to State Governments, companies and government departments.

It is priced at RM49.90 each.

For more information, contact the toll-free number 1-800 880 239.

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