

Aging chief flies again in tribute to Mahathir

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LANGKAWI: "Aging" RMAF chief Jen Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad took to the skies yesterday and did several stunts as a mark of tribute to Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad for his contributions to the country.

The 55-year-old four-star general thrilled the crowd with one of the RMAF's oldest aircraft, the French-made Alloutte helicopter, after the official launch of Lima 2003 by the Prime Minister.

The Alloutte has been in the air force for 40 years and was formerly used for air surveillance during the Emergency.

Jen Abdullah, who has been dubbed *The Daredevil Pilot*, said that there was no better gesture that the RMAF could make to show its gratitude for the outgoing Prime Minister "than for its own chief to take to the skies once again." He made numerous exciting manoeuvres, including the three-point turn, where he

brought the helicopter to almost a standstill in midair before he swung it around 180 degrees.

"Many of the things I did today have never been attempted with the Alloutte," said Jen Abdullah.

He said his decision to perform the aerial display was also to answer a call made by the Prime Minister a few years back.

"Dr Mahathir had then instructed the RMAF to promote a strong maintenance culture.

"So, my decision to fly the Alloutte is to demonstrate that the RMAF is indeed conducting a proper maintenance of its inventory.

"It was a display of an aging pilot flying an aging helicopter," he added proudly.

Jen Abdullah, who joined the RMAF in 1968 and received his wings a year later, also said that Malaysians had the ability to become capable aerial display pilots if given the chance.