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Putting Langkawi Regatta on world map

Abdul Razak Ahmad

LANGKAWI, Tues. - The Government intends to make the Royal International Langkawi Regatta the most prestigious event in the international sailing calendar to establish Langkawi as a port of call for such events.

Acting Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said to attain this objective, the private sector, the Federal Government and the Kedah Government need to work closely.

"If we work together we can achieve many things, most importantly to make the regatta the most prestigious event in the international sailing calendar and to establish Langkawi as the preferred stopover for international sailing events, and sailors worldwide.

"When this happens, it will automatically boost Malaysia's economy and put Malaysia at the forefront of the world map," he said at the launching of the Royal Langkawi International Regatta 2003 at the Royal Langkawi Yacht Club (RLYC) in Kuah here tonight.

The official opening of the new marina and seawall at the RLYC was also conducted in conjunction with the launch.

Also present were Kedah Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Syed Razak Syed Zain, RLYC chairman and commodore Tunku Abdullah Tuanku Abdul Rahman, chairman of the regatta advisory committee Datuk Megat Najmuddin Megat Khas, and New Straits Times Press (M) Berhad group editor-in-chief Tan Sri Abdullah Ahmad.

The inaugural event, from tomorrow until March 15, will be held annually and complement the Asian Yachting Calendar, which includes similar events held throughout the region.

The regatta is participated by 62 teams comprising seasoned sailors and cruising yachtsmen from the United States, Britain, Australia, Singapore, Germany, New Zealand, Thailand, Hong Kong and Malaysia.

Also participating are three allwomen teams.

Teams entering internationally-registered boats will be competing for the Prime Minister's Challenge Trophy, while clubregistered cruisers will be vying for the Royal Langkawi Yacht Club Commodore's Cup.

The regatta is organised by RLYC with support from the Youth and Sports Ministry and the Malaysian Tourism Promotion Board.

The organisers expect a crowd of over 1,000 for the duration of the regatta.

Abdullah said the regatta was organised in honour of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who has been instrumental in the development of Langkawi.

"His vision for Langkawi is second to none; his determination to make Langkawi world famous is truly remarkable."

Tunku Abdullah said the co-operation of all parties to ensure the success of the regatta would prove that the "Malaysia Boleh" spirit could be achieved.

He noted the special guest attendance of two renowned yachtsmen at the ceremony tonight.

The first was Frenchman Bruno Peyron, who is known as "the fastest man" in the world of sailing for having circled the globe in 64 days.

The second was Datuk Azhar Mansor, who became the first Malaysian to sail around the world solo in 1999.