



DOWN, DOWN AND AWAY: A skydiver doing acrobatics during a practice jump. — Pictures by Roslin Mat Tahir



TOWERING: A skydiver manoeuvring his parachute to a safe landing after jumping off Menara KL.



NICE VIEW: A skydiver, with the Petronas Twin Towers in the background, gliding to the ground after jumping off Menara KL.

BASE jumpers dive off Menara KL in death-defying challenge

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. — Fifty-six people, including two women, chose to challenge gravity as they jumped off Menara Kuala Lumpur today in the death-defying second leg of the Malaysia International Championship of Xtreme Skydive 2002/World BASE Cup 2002 which began today.

Under the slogan "Go KL Jump For Peace", it is aimed at promoting world peace and is organised by the Malaysia International Xtreme Skydive Association, which is the world's governing body for all BASE jump championships.

BASE jumping is skydiving from a fixed object, and stands for Building, Antenna, Span (bridges) and Earth (cliffs).

The competition attracted participants from 16 countries including Germany, New Zealand, Russia, Croatia, France, Australia and England. Malaysia was represented by seasoned jumpers A. Aziz Ahmad, 51, and Karim Salleh, 53.

Competitors jumped off the 421-metre telecommunications tower, the fourth tallest in the world under a gray and foggy sky.

The first leg of the competition saw competitors jumping from the Petronas Twin Towers in the event which began Dec 28. A closing ceremony will be held on Monday.

The competition is divided into five categories — opening accuracy, landing accuracy, individual overall, team and aerial acrobatics.

A competitor from Finland, Iiro Seppanen, 27, has been jumping for five years.

"I had my hands and legs bound with ropes and was pushed out of an airplane. I needed to get out of the

knots during the free fall," he said.

"I saw some videos in BASE jumping, and that was when I decided this is what I wanted to do," he said.

Unfortunately, the practice jump Seppanen took today was too much for his swollen ankle, and he is now out of the competition.

The spokesperson for the event, Karin Sako, said each participant needed to make 10 competition jumps.

"The jumpers are going to have a lot of fun because the object (Menara

KL) is easy to jump from although the landing area is a little challenging," she said.

A BASE jumper herself, Sako said depending on when jumpers deployed their parachutes, the free fall would take an average of seven seconds, and between 10 and 15 seconds when their parachutes opened before they land.

"Most people do this for recreation, but these are very experienced BASE jumpers who are the best in the world," she added.