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Childhood dream of flying finally fulfilled

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IT was an accomplishment for Noor Azmi Shaari, 30, to be able to fly the Zodiac CH601 solo after undergoing training for only one-and-a-half months.

Noor Azmi, who took the Malaysian Experimental Aircraft Association's basic flying course, did so after six hours and 44 minutes of instructions from Mejar Halim Aziz.

Normally, a trainee would be able to fly solo after 10 hours of lessons.

Zodiac CH601 is an experimental aircraft assembled by the first group of Rakan Muda trainees in July last year.

For Noor Azmi, it was a childhood dream fulfilled.

"I had an ambition of becoming a pilot but there was no chance. But now it is different," said Noor Azmi who took up flying as a hobby.

He is a student of the flying course under MEAA for those aged 26 and above. The four-month course costs RM10,800.

Upon completion of the course, the students will get a Restricted Private Pilot Licence (PPL (A) Restricted).

Noor Azmi said at first he was a bit nervous, but with the blessing of his instructor he carried on.

Looking back, he said that at the age of 21 he received an offer to join the Mofaz Air Academy which he did not take up due to financial constraints.

Noor Azmi said although holding a Mara scholarship, he still could not afford to join the academy.

"What I received was not enough to see me through the training and I come from a poor family. Since then I put away any hope of achieving the dream until I stumbled upon MEAA when they were having a promotion at the Selayang Mall," said the Usahasama Proton-DRB assistant workshop manager.

He added that he signed up after finding that the training package that MEAA was offering was attractive as well as cheap.

He said he joined on June 2 this year and was in the first intake of part-time students.

Noor Azmi said he now has a Student Pilot Licence (SPL) from the Department of Civil Aviation.

It was a different story for two Rakan Muda trainees - Mahadi Kamal and Mohd Rozali Mohayat, both 19 - whose interest in the field peaked only after joining the Air Recreation Rakan Muda Programme.

Mahadi, from Klang, joined the programme with the encouragement of friends who had signed up earlier.

"I joined the class on a part-time basis as I am doing a Diploma in Autocad Engineering at Cosmpoint College in Klang," he said.

He and other members were working on assembling the second experimental aircraft Zodiac CH601.

Mahadi, who had been in the programme for more than six months, said he was spending almost every day at the centre at the Airforce (TUDM) Museum, Jalan Lapangan Terbang Lama, Kuala Lumpur.

"What we learn is very valuable and interesting and I have been enjoying myself. I want to gain more knowledge," he added.

Another trainee Mohd Rozali joined the Rakan Muda programme more than a year ago on the recommendation and encouragement of his brother-in-law, who is MEAA honorary secretary Mejar (Rtd) Abdul Razak Omar.

He said at first he was not keen on the programme but after a few

lessons, the interest developed and he decided to stay on.

"To tell the truth, I do not even want to leave this place. If possible I want to gain more knowledge and go on further.

"I now hold a Student Pilot Licence."

Mohd Rozali was one of the trainees involved in assembling the first experimental aircraft Zodiac CH601 which was launched by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on July 27 last year.

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