

16 Rakan Muda pilots on Asean Voyage of Friendship

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KUALA LUMPUR. Sixteen Rakan Muda junior trainee pilots in a fleet comprising their two experimental *Zodiac* light aircraft and one MD3 will take off tomorrow on the Asean Voyage of Friendship 2001.

Launched by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad at the Sungai Besi airforce base today, the voyage is aimed at extending invitations to Asean countries to attend the 21st SEA Games here in September.

The youths, accompanied by eight professional pilots and two engineers, will act as junior ambassadors to

nine Asean countries including Vietnam, Myanmar, Thailand and Philippines.

The one-month expedition will depart tomorrow heading towards the first neighbouring country of Brunei and is expected to arrive back in Malaysia on Aug 31.

Besides the invitation, the youths will also be carrying with them the first section of the Longest Banner in the World signed by the Prime Minister, the Youth and Sports Minister Datuk Hishammuddin Hussein, the ambassadors of the nine Asean countries and other digni-

ties who were present at the launch today.

In his speech, Mahathir said it was heartening to note that the Rakan Muda volunteers were using their own experimental aircraft to undertake the voyage.

"This fulfills our aim of increasing interest and ability among youths in the field of making as well as flying aircraft.

"Maybe one day, Malaysians will be able to build their own innovative aircraft and they might even produce new kinds of aircraft powered by rockets and new energy sources," he said.