

# Dr M: We can also fly high

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KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia has the potential to fly high in the aviation and aircraft manufacturing industry if more youths show a keen interest in the Rakan Muda Air Recreation Programme, said Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

The Prime Minister said he was confident that youth involvement in the programme could lead to a better understanding about aviation science and spur the country's aviation and aircraft manufacturing sector.

The youths could start from scratch and slowly improve their capabilities, he said when launching the Asean Voyage of Friendship 2001 expedition at the Royal Malaysian Airforce base in Sungai Besi yesterday.

"We should not forget that the industry started with the invention of an aircraft by the Wright brothers produced in a primitive way.

"But aviation science and

technology to assemble aircraft have made headway that we see today with the inventions of the Boeing 747, Airbus, Supersonic Concorde and high-speed fighter jets.

Similarly, Dr Mahathir said,

the country's automotive industry which started 15 years ago has now achieved progress that is not far behind that of the developed countries which have been in existence for more than 100 years.

"If we start in a small way — but with keen interest, perseverance and hardwork — we will be able to progress and catch up with the developed nations.

"Maybe, one day we will be

able to build sophisticated aeroplanes and produce new aircraft and rockets," he said.

The expedition, from yesterday to Aug 21, was inspired by an idea from Dr Mahathir in 1996 that the country's youths could build their own planes.

It is also part of the run-up to invite Asean member countries to attend the 21st SEA Games in September, apart from preserving friendship and neighbourliness among the Asean countries.

The expedition involves a fleet comprising two Rakan Muda experimental light aircraft, Zodiac and MD3.

Led by professional pilot Abdul Latif Endot, who is also the private secretary to the Youth and Sports Minister, 16 trainee pilots, seven professional pilots and two engineers will be taking part in the expedition.

More information on the Asean Voyage of Friendship 2001, can be obtained at <http://aseanvoyage.skali.com>.