

Asean friendship voyage team flies north

By SIMON KHOO

KUALA LUMPUR: The Asean Voyage of Friendship 2001 (northern route) took off from the Royal Malaysian Air Force base in Sungai Besi here without any glitches yesterday.

The two Zodiac light experimental aircraft assembled by *Rakan Muda* volunteers — the 9M-ERM and 9M-ERA — were piloted by Col Zakaria Salleh and Affendy Syed Omar.

Assisted by junior trainee pilots Shahrizal Azley Sulaiman and Tan Soo Min, they left the base for Yangon at about 9.05am.

Present at the sending off were the project's special envoy Abdul Latif Endot and officials from the Youth and Sports Ministry and the RMAF.

Abdul Latif said the northern attempt would take 17 days and cover approximately

4,000 nautical miles over five countries namely Myanmar, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia and Thailand.

"Having successfully completed the southern leg of the expedition, we look forward to extending our hand of friendship to the remaining Asean members," he said.

He added that it was the country's custom to hand-deliver the official invitation

scroll to Asean members for the 21st Kuala Lumpur SEA Games in September.

On July 14, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad launched the expedition as part of the *Rakan Muda* aviation development programme.

The objective, among others, was to enhance the spirit of volunteerism among youths.