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Loving every minute of his job

JUST how much appeal can a job hold if you need to wear a uniform weighing at least 15kg to work daily, be disciplined about sleep and diet and are subject to a fairly erratic family life?

Quite a lot really, if your idea of a "high" is to be engaged in combat thousands of metres up in the air, in the seat of some of the world's fastest and sophisticated aircraft.

"The satisfaction I derive from this job lies in the technical jargon used, the speed in which we get to fly the jets and the way we work ... memang syok," is how Kapt Indra Shahrin, the "baby" in the group of pilots doing aerial displays at Lima '01 puts it.

The 27-year-old, who is attached to the Royal Malaysian Air Force base in Butterworth and flies the F/A-18 Hornet, says despite the hazards associated with the job, he loves every minute of his six-year career with the force.

Indra, together with Bukit Mertajam-born Mej Koay Tang Chai, have been enjoying entertaining spectators to this Lima '01 and are promising to give their best this weekend when the air shows are open to the public.

The pilots - both flying the F/A-18s and MiG29s - should have no worries about putting on a good show today and tomorrow, based on the rave reviews the team has been getting this week over their aerial displays.

"It was no added pressure for them to fill in for the Thunderbirds and Red Arrows," says the formation leader of the MiG 29 pilots Lt Kol Kamalruzaman Mohd Othman.

"The six MiG pilots here at Lima are very experienced and have chalked up an average of 1,500 flying hours."

The aerobatic display by the RMAF pilots received tremendous praise from the public.

On Friday, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who was impressed with the performance, showered praises on the team.

"We can take pride in their performance. The pilots of our F18 (F/A-18D Hornet) and MiG29 (MiG-29N Fulcrum fighter jets) performed admirably although they are combat pilots and not aerobatic pilots. They have given an exciting aerial display," he said.

Meanwhile, Kol Jusof Embong, the F/A 18 team leader, said he was satisfied with the skills displayed by his men, considering they only had one and half weeks to train.

He said this weekend's public display would be no different from the daily duties executed by all RMAF pilots.

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