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Zodiacs off for northern leg of voyage

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - Two light experimental aircraft assembled by Rakan Muda volunteers set off today for the northern leg of the Asean Voyage of Friendship 2001.

The two Zodiac aircraft, the 9M-ERM and 9M-ERA, are piloted by Kolonel Zakaria Salleh and Shahrizal Azley Suleiman, and Affendy Omar and Tan Soo Min respectively.

Zakaria and Affendy are experienced pilots while the other two are Rakan Muda junior trainee pilots.

The northern leg of the voyage to hand over the invitations to attend the Sea Games here in September will cover Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, Myanmar and Vietnam.

The project's special envoy, Abdul Latif Endot, said the northern attempt was expected to be the most challenging one due to the monsoon season and the region's mountainous terrain.

The trip will take up to 17 days and will cover more than 4,000 nautical miles.

"Having successfully completed the southern leg of the expedition, we look forward to this trip," he said.

In Phuket, Thailand, the Zodiacs will be joined by three Piper aircraft from the Singapore Youth Flying Club led by Major Jonathan Seah.

On Aug 7, a CN235 from the Royal Malaysian Air Force will take journalists and other Rakan Muda junior trainee pilots to the five countries.

The junior pilots will take turns to assist the senior pilots of the two experimental aircraft.

The Asean Voyage of Friendship 2001 was launched by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on July 14 as part of the Rakan Muda aviation development programme.

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