

Air force retires fleet of veteran Cessnas

2010/12/04

By Adrian David

news@nst.com.my



The Cessna 402B has been used for pilot training since 1975.

SUBANG: After faithfully serving the Royal Malaysian Air Force for 35 years, the twin-engine, propeller-driven Cessna 402B was decommissioned yesterday.

A simple ceremony was held at the RMAF base here, where its chief Gen Tan Sri Rodzali Daud was present.

He said one of the Cessnas would be sent to the RMAF museum in Sungai Besi while the rest would be used to teach technical courses.

The RMAF took delivery of 10 Cessna 402B initially for advanced flying training of its pilots at the No. 1 flight training school in Alor Star in 1975.

Another two were used for aerial photography by the National Survey and Mapping Department.

In 1983, the arrival of an initial batch of 44 Pilatus PC-7 turbo trainers replaced the Cessnas, along with the single-engine Bulldog B108, used for basic pilot training.

The Cessnas were moved to the No. 2 squadron at the RMAF base in Sungai Besi to help train pilots for multi-engine conversion.

In 1987, three Cessnas were sent to the RMAF base in Kuching.

In 1993, the airplanes began serving the No. 4 squadron at the RMAF base here, with a detachment deployed to RMAF Sungai Besi.

Four years later, the planes became part of the No. 20 squadron here.

Rodzali said the Cessnas served well for other functions like military and civil communication, mercy missions, search and rescue operations, reconnaissance and even for VIP flights.

He added that the aircraft was also used to train the country's first women transport pilots, Lt Zainab Sharif and Lt Fadzillah Abdullah.

Another milestone was when three of the aircraft -- the Spirit of Malaysia I, II and III -- took part in the Malaysian International Air Race '90 that flew between Langkawi and Paris. Former RMAF chief Lt-Gen Tan Sri Mohammed Ngah Said led the team.

Earlier at the ceremony, Rodzali presented scrolls to 32 officers who graduated from the Air Force College in Alor Star.

Courtesy NST Saturday 4 December, 2010