Pilot **Zaharie Ahmad Shah, 53**, had more than 18,000 flight hours and had worked for Malaysia Airlines since 1981.

A man dedicated to flying, Zaharie had a flight simulator at home he himself had built. The AP reported the pilot was also a grandfather and enthusiastic handyman, who had posted several YouTube videos on home improvement projects.

Neighbors of both men told the AP they were both committed to their respective communities. Fariq played futsal, a modified form of soccer popular in Southeast Asia, with neighborhood children and paid for their sports shirts, the AP reported.

Zaharie was known for cooking food for community events or making sure his wife and children did when he couldn't attend, the AP reported, adding that the pilot had also volunteered to be a poll monitor in recent elections.

Fariq has drawn heavy criticism since it was revealed he and another pilot invited two women to sit in the cockpit for a flight from Phuket, Thailand to Kuala Lumpur in 2011 — claims Malaysia Airlines has said it was investigating.

The airline also defended Zaharie's right to have a flight simulator at home, when the issue came under fire at a news conference.

Malaysia Airlines CEO Ahmad Jauhari Yahya said "everyone is free to do his own hobby."