

PM - JET

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KUALA LUMPUR, JUNE 3 (BERNAMA) -- THE AIRCRAFT (DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR MOHAMAD FLEW OFF IN THIS EVENING ON HIS SOUTH PACIFIC TOUR IS A FACTORY-FRESH BOEING 737 THAT WAS DELIVERED JUST FOUR DAYS AGO.

MAS HAD ORDERED IT FOR USE AS AN EXECUTIVE JET FOR STATE AND OFFICIAL VISITS BY THE YANG DI-PERTUAN AGONG AND THE PRIME MINISTER.

CARRYING MAS LIVERY. IT HAS A BEDROOMS, LOUNGE-CUM-DINING ROOM AND AN EXECUTIVE TABLE FOR THE VIP.

THE REAR OF THE FUSELAGE, ON THIS TRIP, HAS ECONOMY CLASS SEATS FOR THE 26-PERSON ENTOURAGE.

THE AIRCRAFT, WITH EXTRA FULE TANKS TO EXTEND ITS RANGE, WAS "RETROFITTED" TO VIP STANDARDS AT DALLAS IN THE UNITED STATES IMMEDIATELY AFTER IT WAS TAKEN DELIVERY OF AT SEATTLE.
-- BERNAMA MORE 2000/AZ

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MAS ENGINEERS CERTIFIED THE ALTERNATIONS AND THE AIRCRAFT WAS FLOWN TO KUALA LUMPUR ON SUNDAY.

MAS OFFICIALS, WHO DID NOT WANT TO DISCLOSE THE COST OF THE AIRCRAFT AND ITS FITTINGS, SAID THE AIRLINE WOULD CHARTER THE BOEING TO THE GOVERNMENT FOR STATE AND OFFICIAL VISITS.

WHEN NOT ON CHARTER, THE VIP FITTINGS WOULD BE REMOVED AND THE AIRCRAFT USED ON THE AIRLINE'S REGIONAL AND DOMESTIC ROUTES AS A STAND-IN FOR OTHER AIRCRAFT.

IT IS MAS' 12TH B737 AND ON ITS MAIDEN FLIGHT TODAY, THE AIRCRAFT WILL MAKE A TECHNICAL STOP AT BALI AND REFUEL AT PORT MORESBY ON ITS 16-HOUR JOURNEY TO SUVA, FIJI.

THE 737 HAS A SEATING CAPACITY OF 112, BUT THE MAS AIRCRAFT HAVE 106 TO PROVIDE FOR MORE SPACIOUS SEATING AND ARE USED ON DOMESTIC RUNS AS WELL AS PLY TO SINGAPORE, MANILA, MEDAN, JAKARTA AND HAADYAI. -- BERNAMA 2003/AZ