

PM away on overseas holiday on National Day?
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While the nation marked the twin festivities of Aidilfitri and National Day on Wednesday, Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak has been conspicuously missing out on the celebrations.

The premier was last spotted on Aug 30 at the Istana Negara for the royal Hari Raya Open House event and issued a National Day statement through Facebook and Twitter the next day.

In his tweet, he urged Malaysians not to forget the struggles of our forefathers in fighting for the country's independence. "Happy 54th Merdeka Day," he wrote.

By being away on an overseas holiday on an auspicious day such as National Day, Najib opened himself to attack at a time when opposition leaders are criticised for being unpatriotic for allegedly questioning the role of certain national heroes.

In an email yesterday, a Malaysiakini reader said he believes that the premier is currently in Perth, Australia since a private jet meant for the prime minister landed there on Wednesday, Aug 31.

When contacted, Najib's aides declined to reveal the prime minister's exact whereabouts during National Day or whether he is indeed currently overseas.

"He is on holiday and will be back next week like everyone else," said one aide.

Najib's press secretary Tengku Sariffudin Tengku Ahmad merely replied, "He is on leave" three times, when asked whether the prime minister was in the country or in Australia.

The reader, who contacted Malaysiakini, based his theory on reports that Najib was in Australia on two websites which log photographs and times of aircraft arrivals at the Perth International Airport.

'November Romeo 1'

According to the AviationWA website, an Airbus A319-11X sporting the 1Malaysia symbol as the tail logo landed at 5.04pm on Wednesday.

The plane had departed from Changi International Airport, Singapore, and bore the registration number 9M-NAA.

AviationWA reports that aircraft stayed overnight and used the call-sign "November Romeo 1" or NR1, which incidentally are similar to the premier's initials.

Both AviationWA and the Perth Airport Spotter's blog report that this is the plane's first visit to Perth.

The aircraft is operated by Jet Premier One (M) Sdn Bhd. The aircraft was bought by Penerbangan Malaysia Bhd (PMB), which is a subsidiary of Khazanah Nasional Bhd.

Back in 2007, Najib's predecessor Abdullah Ahmad Badawi denied that his administration had bought the plane for RM200 million and stated that it was purely a PMB decision.

Meanwhile, one of Najib's aides said that the public can still visit the premier during his open house function in his home base of Pekan, Pahang on Sept 18.