

PM's jet comes home after round-the-world trip

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After a round-the-world trip, the government VIP jet that took Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak to his golfing trip with US President Barack Obama has finally returned to Malaysia.

The Airbus A319CJ aircraft bearing the registration number 9M-NAA landed at Kuala Lumpur International Airport at 10.20 last night, according to flight tracking service Flightradar24, after being in Bangkok's Don Mueang International Airport since Friday.

It then took off again 35 minutes later for Subang Airport where it is normally based.

According to Bernama, Najib met with his Thai counterpart, Prayuth Chan-ocha, in Bangkok on Jan 2 after spending the previous days visiting flood-hit areas throughout Malaysia.

The PM was scheduled to attend a function at his office in Putrajaya this morning, but he did not make an appearance. His deputy, Muhyiddin Yassin, was present instead.

The VIP jet had left Subang for Honolulu, Hawaii, on Dec 20 last year, where Najib spent his holiday with his family and played golf with Obama.

The PM's holiday was cut short, with Najib returned on Dec 27 in response to the worsening flood in the country, and he reached Kota Bahru via another jet.

However, since Dec 26, the Airbus aircraft flew without Najib to Los Angeles, Indianapolis, back to Los Angeles, New York, London, Dubai, and finally to Bangkok.

Most of these stops lasted no more than a few hours, except for the stop in Indianapolis, which lasted six days from Dec 26 until Dec 31.

It is not clear who was using the jet until its arrival in Bangkok or for what purpose. However, Indianapolis is also where the company Comlux Aviation is based.

The company had refurbished the aircraft before and reportedly has a six-year maintenance and service contract for the aircraft since 2013.

Both the Prime Minister's Office and Comlux have yet to respond to Malaysiakini's queries on Jan 2 seeking clarification on the matter.

It is also not clear how Najib reached Bangkok from Malaysia since the 9M-NAA had yet to return at the time. However, it is possible that he took another government VIP jet.

This other jet, a Boeing 737 BBJ, made a trip from Subang to Bangkok on Jan 1, and then made its way back to Subang just an hour after landing in Bangkok, according to Flightradar24.

The same aircraft had also landed at Kota Bahru from Hong Kong on Dec 27, at the same time and day that Najib reportedly returned from his holiday.

Both the Airbus 319CJ and the Boeing 737 BBJ are part of a fleet of government VIP jets meant for the use of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, sultans, yang di-pertua negeri, ministers, deputy ministers, foreign guests of the federal government, senior government officers and VIPs, as well as the prime minister.

According to a 2013 parliamentary reply by then Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Shahidan Kassim, the cost of operating the fleet in 2012 was RM182 million.

The figure was for seven VIP jets and helicopters that made 372 trips to 339 destinations that year, but it does not include the Airbus jet.

In a separate parliamentary reply earlier in 2013, Shahidan had said the Airbus jet had cost RM86.4 million to rent from 2010 to 2012, RM16.515 million for maintenance and RM3.32 million for repairs over the three-year period.

That comes to an average cost of RM33.46 million per year.

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