

Govt leasing Airbus

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It is for govt use, not just for the Prime Minister, says Pak Lah

SEPANG: The Government is leasing an Airbus from Penerbangan Malaysia Bhd (PMB) for VIP use, as it is cheaper than buying one.

Denying reports that the aircraft was only meant for use by the Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said the aircraft would also be used by the King.

"We are not purchasing, we are

leasing. Why should we buy an aircraft when it will cost so much more; so it is better for the Government to lease it and not worry about repairing the aircraft," he said on his return from a working trip to London and Davos.

"The aircraft belongs to PMB, it is their money. The Government is only leasing it, just like MAS is leas-

ing aircraft from PMB."

Asked how much it cost the Government to lease the aircraft, Abdullah replied: "I will reveal the details later if you really want to know.

"The aircraft is for government use, not for the Prime Minister. And Government also means the Yang di-Pertuan Agong."

Several blogs have reported that a US\$50mil Airbus A319 corporate jet was ordered by the Government in mid-2005, and the interior work was being done in Switzerland.

PMB is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Khazanah Nasional Bhd, the Government's investment arm, and is the parent company of Malaysia Airlines.