

Putrajaya defends purchase of new private jet
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The Prime Minister's Department defended the purchase of a new private jet for Datuk Seri Najib Razak's use as a cost-saving move after PKR exposed today that Putrajaya had added a seventh jet to its fleet.

A statement by the department today said the government decided to buy the jet, an Airbus Corporate Jetliner (ACJ320), through a hire-purchase agreement for 15 years to replace an older jet because of maintenance costs and safety concerns.

The older aircraft, a Boeing Business Jet (BBJ) will be disposed off to finance the purchase of the new jet, the statement said.

It added that the decision to purchase a new plane was made two years ago in view of the increasing costs required to maintain the older aircraft.

"The purchase of the ACJ320 for the government executive fleet of aircraft will help to reduce operational, management and maintenance costs in view of the fact that we already own an ACJ319," the statement said. The ACJ319 is the current aircraft commonly used by the prime minister.

Earlier today, a pro-Umno blog claimed that the aircraft is not just for the prime minister's use, but is also at the disposal of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong and state rulers.

The blog, "MyKMU.Net", quotes government sources as saying the decision to buy the personal jet was to replace the existing ailing BBJ373-700NG VVIP jet that was almost 20 years old and costs more to maintain.

"A replacement like this is a common practice because in Malaysia, the prime minister is not the only VVIP. There are also the King and the Malay rulers who have a right to use a government jet."

The writer of the blog also asserted that as the highest commander of the military, the King was also entitled to the best service in technology and security.

"So the allegation by Rafizi that the purchase is a waste of money because the government already has six jets is inaccurate. The government is actually in the process of replacing an old plane," the blog said.

The blog also rubbished Rafizi's claim that the government was wasting funds by purchasing personal planes annually.

"This is the first time since Najib became prime minister that he has decided to switch to a new jet," it said.

It also argued that the people's money was also being saved because the purchase of the new jet will cut the high maintenance cost for the old aircraft, adding that it was in the process of being sold, possibly for its parts.

The blog also went on to say an open tender was not suitable for the purchase of the jet, as it involved certain specifications.

"The purchase was also done via a direct negotiation with Jet Premier One (M) Sdn Bhd, a company that has a contract to maintain and handle ACJ319 government jets. It simplifies the plane's purchase and handling matters."

The blog then took a dig at the Pakatan Rakyat controlled Penang government, saying that the DAP-led administration also did not call for an open tender for its undersea tunnel project.

Earlier today, PKR's Pandan MP Rafizi Ramli revealed that Putrajaya had ordered a new private jet for Najib's use, bringing the current tally of jets owned by the government to seven.

He said the new jet, an Airbus ACJ320 was secured through a direct negotiation hire-purchase deal with Jet Premier One, the same company handling the current Airbus ACJ319 jet used by the prime minister, which was secured for RM28.8 million yearly in hire purchase and RM5.5 million in yearly maintenance cost, excluding the cost of fuel.

"Even the 1Malaysia logo has been painted on it. This shows the Najib administration is continuing with its wasteful ways, just as the people are shocked to find out about the 1MDB scandal," Rafizi had said in a press conference at the parliament lobby. – March 16, 2015.

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