

DAP: More questions than answers in MH370 report
MalaysiaKini.com
May 2, 2014

The government's preliminary report on MAS flight MH370's disappearance raises more questions than it provides answers, said DAP.

DAP parliamentary leader Lim Kit Siang said details in the five-page report released last night was "scant at best" compared to the 128-page report into Air France 447 released one month after the plane disappeared.

"Instead of answering the many questions that have been raised in the past eight weeks ... both the preliminary report and the statement by the Acting Transport Minister Hishammuddin Hussein accompanying it have only provoked more questions," said Lim in a statement today.

In particular, Lim said the belated revelation that the prime minister had ordered for the search for the plane to be extended to the northern Straits of Malacca following study of Malaysian radar records raised questions.

"For the first time in 56 days, Malaysians are told that the Prime Minister Najib Razak had on the very same morning of the missing MH370, ordered the search and rescue operations (SAR) to be extended to the Straits of Malacca, alongside that being carried out in the South China Sea.

"Was this true that right from the very beginning of the search-and-rescue operation for the MH370 on the morning of May 8...?" he asked.

"If so, why didn't Hishammuddin announce it earlier, instead of waiting for 55 days until yesterday in a statement accompanying the publication of the government's preliminary report on the missing MH370?" said Lim.

Malacca Straits search never mentioned

Over the past two months the government has been criticised for allowing the search effort to waste over a week scouring the sea off southern Vietnam before it was eventually confirmed that the plane had diverted towards the Indian Ocean, flying over Malaysia's northernmost airspace.

Lim said Najib himself made no specific mention of the westward search in his press conference on March 8 held just after 7pm.

Instead, he said, at the press conference it was mentioned vaguely that the search being

“expanded as wide as possible” and “we are searching in Malaysian and Vietnamese waters”.

He added the next day on March 9, Civil Aviation Department director-general Azharuddin Abdul Rahman told the press that the search operation had been expanded further in the South China with "no mention whatsoever of its expansion to the Straits of Malacca".

As late as May 12, RMAF was still making confusing statements about whether the plane had been tracked flying towards the Malacca Straits.

Lim also criticised the "many fatal omissions" in the report in relation to the critical first few days when the plane disappeared off commercial radar.

"For instance, the failure to explain the many flip-flops, contradictions and confusions in the information given out by the various authorities, for instance, the initial information that MH370 had lost contact at 2.40am when it was subsequently established that the aircraft disappeared from the Malaysian air traffic controllers' radar at 1.21am Malaysian time."

He also raised the "most fatal error" that remains unexplained, of the four-hour delay after contact was initially lost to the launch of the search operations in the morning.

'Emergency SOPs not followed'

Citing civil aviation emergency standard operating procedures, Lim said an uncertainty phase (Incerfa) should be invoked within 30 minutes, an alert phase (Alerfa) within 60 minutes and a distress phase (Detresfa) upon failure to establish communication with the plane.

"All these emergency standard operating procedures were violated in the MH370 case, for Alerfa should have been declared at 1.51am, Incerfa at 2.21am and Detresfa before 3am to launch a full-scale SAR operation instead of delaying until 5.30am that day," said Lim.

"Another grave omission is the role of the Royal Malaysian Air Force and the military radar in the MH 370 disaster," he added.

The preliminary report detailed how military radar detected a plane flying over its airspace but took no action until the data was reviewed around 8:30am and sent to the air force at 9am.

The home minister was briefed at 10.30am and in the next hour Malaysian ships and planes were sent in the direction of the Malacca Straits.

The Beijing bound plane would have flown clear of Malaysian airspace by that time and with had eight hours of fuel on board, would have run out.

"Unless Hishammuddin can give satisfactory explanation for these new additional discrepancies in the latest official accounts of what happened in the first crucial days ... he has only himself to blame if the government preliminary report and his statement accompanying it suffer a serious credibility gap," said Lim.

Copyright © 1999-2012 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd
Source: <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/261663>