

Najib: Remains and black boxes will be retrieved
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MH17 Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak has announced that an agreement has been achieved on the bodies from the MH17 crash site and the black boxes.

At a special press conference at his official residence in Putrajaya shortly after midnight, Najib said the remains would be flown back to Amsterdam.

"The remains of 282 people, currently in Torez, will be moved by train to Kharkiv, where they will be handed over to representatives from the Netherlands.

"The train will depart this evening, Ukraine time, and will be accompanied by six Malaysian members of the recovery team.

"The remains will then be flown to Amsterdam on board a Dutch C130 Hercules, together with the Malaysian team.

"Following any necessary forensic work, the remains of Malaysian citizens will then be flown home to Malaysia," he said.

He also said that at 9pm Ukraine time (2am Malaysian time), the black boxes would be handed over to Malaysian authorities.

Najib said the agreement was brokered with Alexander Borodai, the leader of pro-Russia East Ukraine separatist group controlling the Donestk region where MH17 came down.

Access to crash site

Borodai also gave his assurance that the international investigation team would be granted access to the crash site.

"Only then can the investigation into MH17 truly begin; only then can the victims be afforded the respect they deserve.

"We need to know what caused the plane to crash, and who was responsible for it, so that justice may be done," Najib said.

The United States and Ukraine have concluded that the Malaysia Airlines Boeing 777, which was carrying 298 passengers and crew, was shot down by separatists using anti-aircraft missile.

Australia, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, which also lost citizens on MH17, have applied pressure on Russian President Vladimir Putin to push the separatists to allow access to the site and bodies.

However, Malaysia has declined to make a conclusion until further investigations.

Meanwhile, Najib said the agreement with Borodai was the fruit of behind-the-scene negotiations.

"In recent days, there were times I wanted to give greater voice to the anger and grief that the Malaysian people feel. And that I feel. But sometimes, we must work quietly in the service of a better outcome.

"I understand that for the families, nothing can undo this damage. The lives taken cannot be given back; the dignity lost cannot be regained," Najib said.

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