

Cabinet, DPM open house events postponed
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Day 7 of the MH17 tragedy

Latest developments
Offer to bury Muslim victims at Putrajaya

Second black box being looked at

Remains not expected back In M'sia before Raya

Separatist leader now denies missile admission claim

UK says data from one one black box 'intact'

Proof of looting vas victims' phones are answered, credit cards used
Follow us as we bring the latest updates and coverage on Flight MH17:

Ukrainian PM resigns

11.49pm: Reuters reports that Ukraine's prime minister tendered his resignation today, berating parliament for failing to pass legislation to take control over the country's increasingly precarious energy situation and to increase army financing.

Earlier today two parties quit a parliamentary coalition, a move that opened the way for a new election to clear what a politician called "Moscow agents" from the chamber, a decision welcomed by President Petro Poroshenko.

Prime Minister Arseny Yatseniuk's resignation could leave a hole at the heart of decision-making when Ukraine is struggling to fund a war with pro-Russian rebels in its east and dealing with the aftermath of a plane crash that killed 298 people.

The usually mild-mannered Yatseniuk bellowed at politicians who had failed to pass a law to allow a liberalisation of control over Ukraine's pipeline system.

He said Ukraine's politicians were at risk of losing the hearts and minds of the thousands who protested for months in the "Maidan" protests in favour of joining Europe and against a pro-Moscow president.

"History will not forgive us," he told parliament.

"Millions of people made this revolution. We did not take the European choice but the 'heavenly hundred' and thousands of other Ukrainians did," he said, referring to those killed, mainly by sniper fire, during the protests.

Yatseniuk, who has been central to talks with the European Union and the United States, cannot leave office immediately, political analysts said, because he is obliged to oversee his duties before a new prime minister and government are installed.

Jamil Khir, Kurup to handle funerals

10pm: Bernama reports two ministers have been appointed to handle the funeral process of Malaysian victims.

Defence Minister Hishammuddin Tun Hussein said the two ministers were Ministers in the Prime Minister's Department Jamil Khir Baharom, to handle the remains of the Muslim victims, and Joseph Kurup, for the non-Muslim victims.

He said Women, Family and Community Development Minister Rohani Abdul Karim had been tasked to manage the next-of-kin of the victims concerned.

"This has been decided at the cabinet meeting today and the ministers concerned will meet to discuss the matter.

"The Malaysian Armed Forces (ATM) is given the responsibility on the ceremonial aspects to receive the remains," he told reporters at the breaking of fast with senior ATM officers and members of the Royal Malaysian Navy (RMN) onboard the vessel, KD Mahawangsa in Port Klang today.

Offer to bury Muslim victims at Putrajaya

7pm: Malaysia has offered to bury Muslim victims of MH17 at a Putrajaya gravesite.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Jamil Khir Baharom tells The Star that the Muslim remains will also be prayed over at Sultan Abu Samad mosque upon arrival in KL.

21 of the 43 Malaysians who perished on July 17 were Muslims.

The families can however choose not use the special Putrajaya grave site, in Precinct 20, and bring the remains to be buried in respective hometowns, the minister added.

Second black box being looked at

6.45pm: The Air Accidents Investigation Branch (AAIB) in Farnborough, southwest of London, is now looking at the second black box - the flight data recorder - which records information from instruments on the plane, AFP reports.

But the analysis of any data will be done by an international team led by the Dutch, AFP says.

The boxes - which are actually orange in colour - were delivered to Farnborough by the Dutch Safety Board (OVV), passed on by Malaysian officials who took it from Eastern Ukraine separatists in Donetsk. The OVV is coordinating investigation teams from eight different countries, including Russia.

More planes with MH17 dead to depart Kharkiv

6pm: Netherlands can expect to receive another 74 remains of victims from MH17 today as more planes prepare to take off from Kharkiv, BCC reports.

The first 40 bodies arrived in wooden coffins on Wednesday and the process of identifying the dead are being carried out, BBC says.

Two more transport aircraft will land in the afternoon. They will be met by a band playing the Last Post, followed by a minute's silence.

The process of moving the bodies from the crash site and out of Ukraine is expected to continue at least until Friday.

Meanwhile, Selangor MB Abdul Khalid Ibrahim tweets that the sultan has decreed that state flags should be flown at half mast when the remains of the MH17 victims arrive in Malaysia.

Abbott: Putin backs Aussie bid to secure site access

5.35pm: Australian PM Tony Abbott says Vladimir Putin would back an idea to send troops to secure MH17 crash site as the Russian president said that being a father, he could empathise with families of the victims.

Up to 50 Australian Federal Police are now in London, ready for deployment to Donetsk in eastern Ukraine, controlled by pro-Russian separatists.

"President Putin does think it is important that the site be secured by international police so that the thorough, impartial, international investigation that the United Nations called for...can go ahead," Abbott is quoted saying by Wall Street Journal.

"President Putin gave me assurances that he wanted to see families of the victims satisfied. He wanted to see, as a father himself, grieving families given closure."

Cabinet and DPM's open house postponed

4.50pm: A day after calling for Malaysians to have a moderate Hari Raya celebrations in light of the tragedy, Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin leads by example.

A statement by the Deputy Prime Minister's Office informs that his open house in Pagoh, Johor, will be postponed.

The event was earlier scheduled for July 29 and is now postponed to a later date out of respect for the families and friends of passengers and crew aboard MH17.

Muhyiddin is also the MP for Pagoh.

This comes after Cabinet Minister's open house at Sri Perdana and national-level open house at Dataran Rembau on Aug 17 are also been cancelled.

Mayor apologises for call to deport Putin's daughter

4.45pm: Thousands of men and women, dressed in all-white tops, marched down Amsterdam's city canals on Wednesday in honour of those killed on flight MH17 as bodies started arriving from Ukraine, the AFP reports.

The marchers also released hundreds of white balloons into the sky as night fell in Amsterdam.

"And it's important for everyone to wear white, the colour of hope, which means that we're looking to the future," one of the participants Leon,35, tells the AFP.

4.30pm: Pieter Broertjes, the mayor of the Dutch city of Hilversum, is made to apologise after calling for Russian President Vladimir Putin's 29-year-old daughter to be deported from Netherlands as emotions run high following the death of 193 Dutch in the MH17 tragedy.

Broertjes, during a radio interview, made the call for Maria Putin to be thrown out of the country and this was picked up by UK's The Guardian and other news websites. Maria is said to live in Voorschoten with her Dutch boyfriend.

In his apology over Twitter, the mayor admits his words were "not wise" but adds that they "stemmed from a feeling of helplessness that many will recognise."

Meanwhile, The Guardian also reports that Ukrainians living in Netherlands are calling for a peaceful protest outside Maria's flat, quoting De Telegraaf newspaper.

The paper published a photograph of the apartment complex where Maria is believed to be staying.

Insurance companies waive death cert requirement

4.20pm: The Life Insurance Association of Malaysia (Liam) says it is ready to expedite a payout of RM13.7 million for some 95 life insurance policies belonging to Malaysian passengers and crew members on board MH17.

"This tragedy involves many innocent lives. Even though some of the policies have exclusion clause, Liam member companies are making special consideration to waive this clause under the extraordinary circumstances," its president Vincent Kwo says in a statement.

Kwo says Liam's members agreed to waive the requirement of death certificates and once the beneficiaries are confirmed, they can be paid within a week.

Frustration mounts over restricted access to crash site

3.15pm: As frustration mounts over reports on continued restricted access to the crash scene, Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott announces that 50 Australian Federal Police (AFP) officers are en route to London to join an international force seeking to secure the site.

"On the site, it is still clear that nothing is happening without the approval of the armed rebels, who most likely brought the plane down in the first place," he is quoted saying by ABC News.

There are now over 200 Australian officials working on "Operation Bring Them Home", to ensure the remains of 37 Australians on MH17 are brought back.

ABC also reports that an angry Abbott claimed to have had a "private conversation" with Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin after hearing that some victims' credit cards and phones may be in the hands of looters.

Meanwhile, Dutchnews.nl reports that the Netherlands government is also lobbying to deploy hundreds of soldiers and police forensic investigators to Ukraine.

The report quotes Volkskrant news saying that support for the plan, described as 'in the early phases', is now being sought in The Hague and from other world leaders.

Remains not expected back before Raya

2.21pm: The NST reports that Forensics and Disaster Victim Identification teams, working tirelessly in Kharkiv, are expected to complete scanning and tagging of victim's remains by tomorrow.

The report quotes National Security Council principal assistant secretary Lieutenant Colonel Mohd Sukri Hussain as saying the teams, from Malaysia, Netherlands and Australia, have already moved on to remains stored in the third of four refrigerated train wagons.

2.14pm: The remains of 43 Malaysian victims of Malaysian Airlines MH17 are not expected to arrive home to the country before Hari Raya, says Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak.

This is due to technicalities involved in the DNA verification process, he is reported as saying today by The Star Online.

Najib, who was signing the condolence book at the Netherlands Embassy in Kuala Lumpur, expressed anger that international investigators still did not have full access to the crash site, adding he will hold talks with Ukraine authorities on this matter.

Separatists blame OSCE for site inspection delays

1.55pm: The Ukrainian government reiterates it was not responsible for shooting down of Flight MH17, following Russian claims that its radar spotted Ukrainian fighters near the aircraft prior to the incident.

In a statement, the Ukrainian Embassy in Kuala Lumpur says its fighters were not in the area “before, at, and immediately after” the crash, and its armed forces never used any anti-aircraft missiles since the beginning of a military offensive against pro-Russia separatist forces several weeks ago.

“It is the core interest of Ukraine to ensure immediate, comprehensive, transparent and unbiased international full-scale probe into the tragedy,” it adds.

1.40pm: Separatist leader Alexander Borodai claims that the bodies of MH17 victims had been left in the open for three days because he was told by Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) not to touch the remains.

“We wanted to collect the bodies from the very start, but we were under extreme pressure from the OSCE representative, who said: ‘I represent 57 countries. Don’t you dare touch the bodies of the dead’,” he says in an interview with BBC.

He says his group then waited for European experts to arrive and inspect the scene and recover the bodies, but they never showed up, so eventually separatists started work to recover the bodies.

Borodai denies accusations that his group had blocked OSCE inspectors from accessing the MH17 crash site, insisting that it was Kiev that was stalling them.

“Maybe they were afraid, but that means Kiev side intimidated them. Because for our side, we immediately announced that we’d provide all the possible guarantees of safety.

“But obviously when they started asking, ‘Are those guarantees 100 per cent?’ Well how can there be 100 per cent guarantees of safety in a country at war? It’s absurd, you can see that for yourself,” he says.

Victim's credit card used

12.20pm: An unknown person had tried to use the credit card of South African MH17

victim Cameron Dalziel in Ukraine without authorisation, claims his brother-in-law Shane Hattingh.

“People are abusing it in the Ukraine... What's ahead is my sister getting her two sons into schools, and getting their lives moving so that she can actually have the time to grieve, because right now she doesn't,” he tells CNN.

He says his sister - Cameron's widow - had been kept busy with “unfortunate” errands such as cancelling the credit cards.

12.15pm: A three-member team of New Zealand disaster victim identification (DVI) experts had departed for the Netherlands to help identify MH17 victims' bodies, says a Bernama report quoting the Chinese Xinhua news agency.

The team reportedly has international recognition for its expertise following its work during the Christchurch earthquake and Asian tsunami disasters.

“New Zealand is encouraged that a process is under way to repatriate many of the bodies to the Netherlands, and that the aircraft's flight data recorders are now in safe custody...

“But much remains to be done. The crash site must be properly secured, with unimpeded access for international investigating authorities,” New Zealand Foreign Minister Murray McCully is quoted saying.

BUK missile admission denied

12.10pm: Asean and EU ministers lauds Monday's UN Security Council resolution on MH17 and called for its full implementation.

The resolution urges the separatists in Donetsk to allow international investigators full access to the crash site.

“They (the ministers) called for a swift, full and thorough, transparent and independent international investigation into the downing in accordance with international civil aviation guidelines,” the group says in a joint statement following the 20th Asean-EU Ministerial Meeting in Brussels, Belgium.

11.35am: Ukraine separatist commander Alexander Khodakovsky denies admitting in an interview with Reuters that rebel forces had acquired BUK missiles from Russia, The Guardian reports.

The Reuters report quoted the Vostok battalion commander telling Life News that he had merely discussed “possible versions” of events surrounding MH17's shooting.

Guardian adds that others close to Khodakovsky deny the apparent admission in Russian news services as well, and note that Life News has links to Moscow's security services.

Since the incident, the Ukrainian government and its Western allies had accused the rebels of shooting down MH17 with a Russian-supplied missile, while the separatists and Russia denied this, pointing their fingers back at Ukraine.

Data from one black box downloaded

11.20am: The UK British Air Accidents Investigation (AAIB) successfully downloads data from the first of two MH17 black boxes, and work will begin on the second black box later today, according to a Wall Street Journal report.

“The cockpit voice recorder data was successfully downloaded and contained valid data from the flight,” the Dutch Air Safety Board is quoted saying, which adds that the memory module was intact with no evidence of tampering.

Dutch authorities are leading the international investigation on the incident, but has handed the black boxes to the AAIB for analysis because it runs one of only two facilities in Europe capable of the task.

The report adds that it would take weeks to complete the analysis, but it is not expected to help determine who shot down the aircraft. It can, however, help rule out technical failure.

Experts get to task identifying victims

11.10am: A team of 75 forensic experts have started work on identifying the first batch of 40 MH17 victims to arrive at the Hilversum army base in Netherlands, the NST reports.

Joined by experts from other countries, the work started immediately upon the arrival of the victim’s remains.

In addition, NST states the team has vast experience in identifying disaster victims such as during the 2006 Indian Ocean tsunami, and has already conducted lengthy interviews with some of the MH17 victims’ families.

11.07am: While it will take only two full days to draw up DNA profiles of all Malaysian victims onboard MH17, the process of matching them to the bodies now in Netherlands could take weeks and even months.

This means that the bodies may not be retrieved and flown back before Hari Raya, which falls on Monday.

“As soon as the specimens are registered in our lab, we will start on the analysis process as we have given high priority to this matter. As long as the specimens are received in good condition, it is a simple thing to do (to produce the DNA profiles).

“In fact, we have already completed some of them (analysis results),” The Malaysian

Chemistry Department forensic division director Dr Kamaruddin Asri tells The Star.

Earlier this week, the team was reported to have gathered DNA samples from all next-of-kin of Malaysians who perished on MH17

Limited access to crash site

11am: Australian Foreign Minister Julie Bishop says MH17 crash site is still under separatists control, and negotiations are underway for international investigators to gain access to the area.

She and Dutch Foreign Minister Frans Timmermans will be also be meeting Ukrainian leaders in Kiev on how to secure the site and implement the UN Security Council resolution, The Guardian reports.

The council had unanimously called on the Pro-Russian separatists to allow the investigation to take place.

M'sian contingent honours crash victims

10.30am: Seven athletes and two officials wore the Malaysia Airlines (MAS) cabin crew uniforms at the opening of the Commonwealth Games this morning in honour of MH17 crash victims, Bernama reports.

They are Ju Pha Som Net (cycling), Surizan Awang Noh and Fatin Syafiqah Mohd Sukri (women's hockey), Nur Fidrah Noh and Fairoz Abd Jabal (lawn bowl) and Farizal Ismail (rugby), rugby team manager Mohamad Fahmy Abdul Jalil and Malaysia's media attache, Fahmi Omar.

Meanwhile, the rest of the contingent wore black armbands on their left arm, while flag bearer Fatehah Mustafa flew the Jalur Gemilang at half-mast.

The Commonwealth Games opened at 4am (Malaysian time) in Glasgow, Scotland, today. Of the 298 MH17 victims, 82 were from Commonwealth countries.

Bodies in train initially feared 'booby-trapped'

10.05am: National Security Council principal assistant secretary Lieutenant Colonel Mohd Sukri Hussain says the process of removing the bodies of MH17 victims out of a refrigerated train in Kharkiv, Ukraine, had been painstaking due to security concerns.

"Sukri said one of the fears was that the bodies may have been booby-trapped with explosive devices. For this reason, each body bag was scanned before being taken to another area for an initial identification process," states a report by the New Straits Times (NST).

The report also described a sombre ceremony that took place in the Dutch city of Eindhoven as the first batch of 40 caskets arrived in the city in two military transports – one Dutch and one Australian.

“Air traffic here was grounded, trains were stopped and people on the streets bowed their heads in reverence for a minute in respect to those who lost their lives when MH17 was blown out of the sky on July 17...

“A lone bugler sounded a haunting strain on his bugle before the first section of pallbearers from the Royal Netherlands Armed Forces retrieved the caskets... Except for the crackling whine of aircraft engines, the only sound was of the caskets being carried off the aircraft,” the report describes.

UK-Russia dealings under global scrutiny

9.35am: The MH17 incident is becoming an embarrassment to UK Prime Minister David Cameron and his government as its dealings with Russia coming under scrutiny, says the financial news website Business Insider.

It says the UK has 251 arms sales licenses worth £132 million (RM712 million) with Russia that included weapons similar to those suspected to have brought down the aircraft, while Cameron’s Conservative Party had taken large political donations from Russians.

“Mayor of London Boris Johnson — who is expected to stand as a Conservative MP in the upcoming general election — has said he may now refuse to play a game of tennis with one Russian oligarch who donated £160,000 (RM863,400) to the party,” the report adds.

Cameron had pledged to stop the arms sales on Monday, but BBC later revealed that only 31 licenses were halted out of the previous tally of 282.

In addition, Cameron had previously chided France for selling two warships to Russia, just before reports of UK’s arms exports surfaced.

Hundreds gather in Melbourne to mourn

9am: Hundreds have gathered in St Paul’s Anglican Cathedral in Melbourne for a multifaith service to mourn 18 Victorians who died in the MH17 crash, says state broadcaster ABC News.

The service was attended by the consul-generals of the Netherlands and Malaysia as well as well-wishers packed into the cathedral, while others sat outside to watch the service from a large screen at Federation Square.

“For those who love, time is eternity... With the stirring of the wind and in the chill of winter, under the blue sky and in the warmth of summer, we will remember them,” said Victoria Premier Denis Napthine in addressing the service.

Crash victim's phones being 'answered'

8.05am: Relatives of MH17 victims have tried calling the deceased's mobile phone numbers, only to hear "eastern European voices" from the other side of the line, according to a report by the Australia-based Yahoo7 news.

"The relatives quickly called the phone companies to shut down the mobile phone accounts...who agreed to waive the death certificate usually required to shut down an account," the report says, quoting the Dutch newspaper De Telegraaf.

The Yahoo7 report also quotes USA Today saying that international investigators have found that the passenger's luggage have been opened and rifled through.

M'sia not giving up

7am: Transport Minister Liow Tiong Lai urges for the search for human remains at the MH17 crash site to continue to find the passengers and crew who are still unaccounted for.

"We urge the search to continue for those who are still missing and pledge to exhaust all efforts to recover all human remains. The Malaysian government and Malaysia Airlines (MAS) will continue to dedicate all available resources towards that effort," he said in a statement last night.

He added that Malaysia is determined to find the truth behind the incident in order to prevent future shootings and bring those responsible to justice.

Background:

Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17 with 298 people on board crashed in eastern Ukraine at around 10.15pm on July 17 (Malaysian time), near the Ukraine-Russia border. The Boeing 777-200 was flying from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur and was due to arrive at 6am the next day.

A proxy war is taking place in the area pitting the Western-backed Ukraine government against Ukrainian separatists supported by Russia. It is said to be the worst crisis between the West and the former Soviet republic since the Cold War.

US says it is convinced the aircraft was shot down by a surface-to-air missile from territory controlled by Russian-backed Ukrainian rebels.

Russian president Vladimir Putin has blamed the tragedy on the Ukraine government for prolonging the war against the separatists.

Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak says Malaysia will not assign blame until there is concrete evidence but wants "swift justice" against the perpetrators.

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