

**Share more info to keep skies safe, says PM**  
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After the loss of two Malaysian planes, Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak wants greater information sharing between intelligence agencies and airlines to prevent a repeat of the MH17 incident.

He said that even as Malaysia is making efforts to bring the culprits of the shooting to justice, this alone would not prevent another tragedy.

The MH17 tragedy incident, Najib said, has revealed that there are no clear standards for determining whether a flight path is safe. This is apparent in the different choices airlines make when deciding whether to fly over a conflict zone.

“Information sharing can save lives; that was the conclusion of intelligence services after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. After MH17, we must choose collective security over national interest.

“We should commit to sharing flight risk information – among airlines, aviation bodies and nations. In doing so, we can honour those who lost their lives by making our skies safer for all,” he said in an opinion piece published in the UK-based Financial Times yesterday.

MH17 was shot down while flying over Ukrainian airspace on July 17, in an area held by pro-Russian separatists. The incident claimed all 298 lives on board.

A preliminary report by the Dutch Safety Board found that the aircraft was in an unrestricted airspace and complying with air traffic controller’s instructions at that time, although civilian flights at lower altitudes have been restricted.

Najib said countries are currently responsible for declaring flight paths in their respective airspace as unsafe, but it has a conflict of interest in doing so because it also collects fees from aircraft flying over its territory. This amounts to a global revenue of US\$20 billion (RM64 billion) a year.

“Avoiding flying over every conflict zone is impractical; that would paralyse aviation and the world economy. Instead, passengers rely on airlines, regulators and aviation authorities to ensure safe passage,” he added.

To remedy this, Najib suggested that airlines share flight risk data between each other, while countries share more information from their intelligence agencies.

“Countries are understandably reluctant to share sensitive material. But, as the

International Air Transport Association (IATA) has pointed out, recommendations based on intelligence can be presented without compromising security.

“If sanitised information can be shared with civilian national carriers, it can be shared with other airlines,” he said.

In addition, Najib said aviation authorities should share more information flight restrictions in their respective country, noting that Ukraine’s flight restrictions mentioned nothing of surface-to-air missiles and the downing of military aircraft.

He urged that the MH17 tragedy should be taken as an opportunity to remedy these flaws and that the momentum should not be allowed to fizzle out like the Air France Flight 447 crash in 2009.

Following the AF447 crash, investigators had proposed improvements to flight tracking and measures used to find aircraft that had sunk into water.

Failure to implement these before this year is blamed as one of the factors making the search for MH370 difficult.

The MH370 aircraft has been missing since March 8, and a search that is already the most expensive in aviation history is ongoing.