

DCA announcement on MH370 called off
MalaysiaKini.com
Jan 29, 2015

After much anticipation, an announcement on Malaysia Airlines Flight MH370 was called off at the eleventh hour.

The 3.30pm press conference organised by the Department of Civil Aviation (DCA) at its headquarters in Putrajaya was scrapped due to "unforeseen circumstances".

In a statement later today, the DCA said this was because of the presence of several next-of-kin gatecrashing the event, which was meant for members of the media only.

"Due to the presence of next-of-kin at the briefing, it was not appropriate to continue, and the briefing was cancelled," it said.

It added that DCA director-general Azharuddin Abdul Rahman (above, right) will be making a televised statement at 6pm via RTM instead, with separate arrangements to communicate with the next-of-kin.

Family members of the passengers issued a statement yesterday, urging the Malaysian government not to "jump the gun" on the plane's fate.

MH370, with 239 passengers and crew, was en route to Beijing from Kuala Lumpur when it went missing in March last year.

There has been no trace of the plane since, while a search operation in the Indian Ocean is still going on.

The Australia-based Joint Agency Coordination Centre (JACC) said in its weekly update yesterday that four vessels have searched 18,000 square kilometres of deep sea so far, with a fifth vessel to arrive in a few days.

This amounts to about 30 percent of the priority search area, it said.

'Rollerr-coaster ride'

Initially, DCA press officer Jagjit Singh, who was facilitating today's press conference, said that Azharuddin is the only person due to speak.

However, he had said there will be no question-and-answer session during the press conference.

Instead, members of the press were asked to fill up question forms after the conference, and were given an assurance that DCA staff would work overnight to respond to every

question via email by lunchtime tomorrow.

Later, about 4pm, Jagjit made the announcement that the press conference had been called off, with more than 100 media personnel already present.

Responding to the press conference's cancellation, Jacquita Gonzales, a relative of a MH370 victim, expressed disappointment and lamented that the families were put on an emotional roller-coaster ride once again.

“We are going through a roller-coaster ride – one minute this, one minute that. Our emotions are wrecked right now. We don’t know what to say, we don’t know what to feel,” said the wife of the MH370's chief steward Patrick Gomes.

Another next-of-kin Mohd Sahril Shaari questioned the cancellation and urged the government to be more transparent.

He said he came to the press conference to hear matters for himself without the news being filtered through the media.

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