

**DCA declares MH370 crew, passengers presumed dead**  
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The Department of Civil Aviation (DCA) today declared that all 239 passengers and crew on board missing Malaysia Airlines Flight MH370 are presumed to have 'lost their lives'.

DCA director-general Azharuddin Abdul Rahman made the announcement via a live telecast on RTM1 this evening (pix, below).

"It is therefore with the heaviest heart and deepest sorrow on behalf of the Malaysian government, we officially declare MH370 an accident," he said.

However, he added that the search operations for the plane would continue.

MH370, which was en route to Beijing from Kuala Lumpur, went missing last March 8 and its disappearance has been classified as one of modern aviation's greatest mysteries.

Acknowledging that the declaration would be difficult for the loved ones of the passengers and crew, Azharuddin, however, said it was important for families to try to resume their normal lives.

**Search operation 'a priority'**

"Without in any way intending to diminish the feelings of the families, it is hoped that this declaration will enable the families to obtain the assistance they need, in particular through the compensation process."

"Malaysia Airlines will undertake its responsibilities and this includes the fulfilment of the compensation process by the next-of-kin (pix, below), whether through consultation or litigation.

"We understand that Malaysia Airlines is ready to proceed immediately with the compensation process with due regard for the readiness of the next-of-kin to take this step," he said.

With regards to the search for MH370, Azharuddin stressed that the ongoing search and locate operation would continue.

"The Malaysian government assures the families of the passengers and crew that the search for MH370 remains a priority.

"We are committed to continuing all reasonable efforts to bring closure to this unfortunate tragedy, with the cooperation and assistance of the governments of China and Australia.

### **'Survivability highly unlikely'**

With regards to investigations over the plane's disappearance, Azharuddin said that due to the lack of physical evidence, particularly of the flight recorders, there was no evidence to substantiate any speculations as to the cause of the plane's disappearance.

"An interim statement detailing the progress of the safety investigation is expected to be released on or around the one year anniversary of the accident," he added.

Azharuddin said Annex 13 to the Convention on International Civil Aviation (Chicago Convention) said the definition of the term 'accident' includes 'the aircraft is missing'.

"It also states that an aircraft is considered to be missing when the official search has been terminated and the wreckage has not been located," he said.

On the conclusion that MH370 had ended its flight in the southern Indian Ocean, Azharuddin pointed out that it is a remote location and far from any possible landing sites.

"It is also an area with adverse sea conditions with known depths of more than 6,000 metres.

"After 327 days and based on all available data as well as the circumstances mentioned earlier, survivability in the defined area is highly unlikely," he said.

### **Website support**

Azharuddin also said that a special section had been set-up on the MH370 official website solely for the next-of-kin.

"It includes information on the search and investigation efforts, the compensation process, responses to next-of-kin's inquiries as well as other forms of assistance that are available to the next-of-kin."

"It is hoped that this dedicated portal will provide a continuing support system for the next-of-kin," he said.