

One year on, world attention still on missing MH370

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By Mohd Faizal Hassan, Bernama

MH370 Sunday marks the first anniversary of the mysterious disappearance of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH370, yet the tragedy remains a topic of conversation the world over, whether in the real world or on social media.

From the time the plane was reported lost on March 8 last year, the world's attention has been on Malaysia and the search team in the southern Indian Ocean, with many theories, conspiracy ideas and thousands of questions playing in the minds of the public.

Words of hope, encouragement and prayers were conveyed to the family members of the 239 passengers and crew on board the flight, in person and through social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

The number of hits on the social media platforms grew by leaps and bounds.

Evidently, the subject will continue to be on the minds and lips of people all over the world until the missing Boeing 777 aircraft is found one day.

#PrayForMH370, #JusticeForMH370 and #MH370 are some of the online drives made available for those who want to express their sympathy and upload anything relating to the tragedy, like photographs, theories, and infographics of the 404th Boeing plane built.

The discussions and questions are not only in Bahasa Malaysia but other languages as well, including Mandarin, Indonesian, English, Dutch, Danish, Vietnamese, Russian, Thai, Swedish and Italian - all proving that the loss of the plane had kept people around the globe glued to their computers.

Some words of encouragement from the public on social media went like "Lost, but not forgotten - @kodahRocha" and "Pray for a miracle... insha Allah may Allah ease everything - @Miehyorin".

Others went like "Don't give up - @zianazy"; "Wow... it's gonna be a year soon... I really wish there is some closure to the families with very concrete findings - @naZlinaQuadir" and "Thanks Singapore, Vietnam, Philippines, United States, Korea, Japan, Thailand and China for helping Malaysia - @MrsNyna".

There are also those who believe that it is not impossible to find the plane one day, as was the case with Air France Flight 447. That aircraft crashed into the Atlantic Ocean off Brazil on June 1, 2009, while flying from Rio de Janeiro to Paris, resulting in the deaths of all 228 passengers and crew on board.

Wreckage of the plane was found in 2011, following a two-year search.

On Jan 29 this year, the Malaysian government declared the loss of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH370 as an accident under international aviation regulations and said all the 239 passengers and crew are presumed to have died.

When making the announcement, the Malaysian government stressed that the search for the Boeing 777 aircraft will still be a priority.

The announcement was made to facilitate claims for insurance by family members of the passengers and crew.

At the same time, the announcement will enable family members to continue with their lives even though there were some who still hoped for a positive outcome from the search operation.

Various reactions

The announcement elicited varied reactions from the family members, who also went on social media to express themselves.

One of them, Maira Elizabeth, daughter of chief steward Andrew Nari, said: "Now that they've declared it as an accident, and all are presumed to have lost their lives, I gotta work really hard for the family."

Intan Maizura Othman, wife of crew member Mohd Hazrin Hasnan, wrote: "So ends the lives of the 239 crew and passengers of MH370 without any evidence of where it went and what happened to them. May their souls be blessed by Allah. Al-Fatihah".

A message, according to a foreign media report, of KS Narendran, husband of passenger Chandrika Sharma, stated: "Where have you been, Chandrika? Oh, many places. All at the same time. Can you believe that? When will you be back? Your guess is as good as mine. For good. That is. What if I am gone for good?"

In a report in the Straits Times, Sarah Bajc, 48, had written a note to her partner, Philip Wood, 50, a passenger, thus: "The scariest thing I can think of is just never having an answer. If I knew that Philip was dead I could mourn for him properly... I wouldn't have to keep holding him alive every single day. It's exhausting and it's a constant pain."

At the time this article was being written, speculation was rife that the search operation would be terminated soon as nothing had been found.

The speculation drew various reactions on social media, with some people commenting that the family members should no longer hold out any hope or should consider this as closure.

Others did not agree and wanted the search to go on, perhaps at a fresh location and to

start all over again.

Regardless of whether the search goes on or is terminated, the disappearance of Flight MH370 will continue to be a topic of discussion as it is one of the biggest mysteries in the history of world aviation.

Flight MH370, which carried 12 crew and 227 passengers, including two babies, went missing from the radar screen while en route from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing about one hour after it departed the KL International Airport on March 8 last year. It was scheduled to arrive in Beijing at 6.30am on the same day.

40pct of designated area searched so far

The search in the southern Indian Ocean, at the location where the aircraft is believed to have crashed, has covered about 40 percent of the 60,000 sq kms of the designated area, and mapped about 208,000 kilometres of the ocean.

Provided there are no obstacles and delays, the search is expected to be completed by May this year.

Four ships are involved in the search for the ill-fated plane - the GO Phoenix, Fugro Discovery, Fugro Equator and the latest, Fugro Supporter, which is equipped with an autonomous underwater vehicle (AUV).

The Fugro Equator, Fugro Discovery and Fugro Supporter were provided by Dutch company, Fugro, and jointly financed by Australia and Malaysia while the GO Phoenix was hired under contract by the Malaysian government.

- Bernama