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PRIME NEWS

MH370 won't affect ties with China, says Dr M

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NO ISSUE: 'Chinese govt knows nation doing its best in search and recovery'

**HASHINI KAVISHTRI KANNAN
AND M. HAMZAH JAMALUDIN**
KUALA LUMPUR
news@nst.com.my

FORMER prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad has said he was confident the issue of flight Malaysia Airlines MH370 would not affect the relationship between China and Malaysia.

In an exclusive interview with China's official news agency, Xinhua on Monday, he said the Chinese government knew information about the search-and-recovery operation, adding that "they know that Malaysia is also trying its best".

Dr Mahathir said it was understandable that the relatives of those on board the plane were very concerned and emotional over the incident.

However, he said, this would not be detrimental to the relationship between the two governments.

He also justified the efforts made by the Malaysian government in handling the incident, saying they were doing "everything possible".

"In the case of Air France, it took two years to find the black box whereas the MH370 incident was even more mysterious as the plane disappeared without much information.

"This had never happened before to any country, any plan."

Dr Mahathir said Malaysians had done everything they could and they did not have any reason not to tell other people what they had discovered.

"They want to solve this problem, because it is important for Malaysia," he said, adding that he believed that the search would take a long time as there had been no clear indication where the plane was.

In regards to the joint international effort in the search operation, Dr Mahathir said: "The fact that 26 countries are involved in the search is not just because of humanitarian reasons. It is because they need to

know what happened.

"Because if this can happen to a plane, it may happen to other planes. They must know how it happened, so they can ensure that it will not happen again."

In **Dubai**, Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin expressed the nation's gratitude to

the United Arab Emirates (UAE) for its assistance in the search and recovery efforts for MH370.

He thanked the UAE government for sending two aircraft to aid in the search.

"These are difficult times for the loved ones of those who were on board MH370, and our thoughts and prayers continue to be with them," he said in his keynote address at the Fourth Annual Investment Meeting.

In **Putrajaya**, Home Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said police investigations into the disappearance of the aircraft had "entered its second phase".

He said police had recorded statements from 180 people.

"While the Transport Ministry and other agencies are focusing on the technical aspects, police will check on criminal elements, if there are any. Police are also collaborating with other local agencies and foreign investigation agencies in the probe," he said after attending the ministry's monthly gathering yesterday.

Zahid, however, did not divulge the identities of the people whose statements were recorded by police.

During the monthly gathering, Zahid criticised opposition leaders for belittling the government on matters related to MH370 to earn political mileage.

He also defended acting Transport Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein over criticism hurled by certain quarters.

"He (Hishammuddin) has nothing to hide, no hidden agenda. He is just doing his job to locate the missing aircraft." **Additional reporting by Adib Povera**

Page 1 pic: Australian Defence Force Able Seaman clearance diver Michael Arnold is towed by a fast response craft from the Australian vessel 'Ocean Shield' as he scans the water for debris of missing Malaysia Airlines flight MH370 in the southern Indian Ocean on Monday.



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