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NEWS

Air disaster victims remembered at memorial

COMPREHENSIVE: Investigations expected to go on until year-end

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MH17 MEMORIAL SERVICE



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak comforting victims' next of kin at the MH17 memorial ceremony at the Bunga Raya Complex in Sepang yesterday. He urged them to stay strong. Pix by Mohamad Shahrii Badri Saali

INVESTIGATORS working on the Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17 tragedy have obtained a clearer picture of the incident and criminal investigations are expected to continue until the end of the year.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said the criminal investigation conducted by the Joint Investigation Team (JIT) was analysing and investigating all possible scenarios comprehensively.

"JIT has been given the task, by

police and prosecutors, to collect evidence that will assist in identifying the cause of the incident. The team comprises members from Australia, Belgium, Malaysia, Ukraine and the Netherlands, which is the coordinator. It will ascertain the perpetrators behind the downing of Flight MH17," he

said at the MH17 memorial ceremony at the Bunga Raya Complex here yesterday.

Najib said the Investigation aimed to bring the responsible parties to justice and all mechanism to prosecute were being considered, but would not point fingers until solid evidence was obtained.

Najib said those who carried out the heartless, uncivilised, violent and unscrupulous act would be punished.

Malaysia, Najib said, had presented a resolution plan to the United Nations Security Council to set up an international tribunal to prosecute the parties responsible.

"The resolution to be tabled at the International Criminal Tribunal, which involves the cooperation of Malaysia, Australia, Belgium, the Netherlands and

Ukraine, will be distributed to the 15 members of the Security Council.

"We hope through a continuous push on the issue via the international platform, we will bring some solace to the victims' family members and friends.

"This is important as it will allow family members to continue with their lives even though they have lost their loved ones."

He said the Dutch Safety Board (DSB), tasked by the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) to conduct technical investigations, had distributed the final draft report to accredited representatives on June 2.

"According to Annex 13 of the ICAO, all accredited representatives have to provide comment within 60 days.

"DSB will evaluate the comment;

before finalising the report of the incident. The board is estimated to publish the final report by early October."

He reiterated the government's commitment to cooperate fully in both investigations.

"Family members should not worry because as long as the answers are not found, we will not stop looking for them.

"As hard as it is, justice will be given to the family and friends of the victims.

"I understand their pain, but I hope that family members of the victims can go on with their lives, knowing that their souls are at rest," he said, and urged them to stay strong.

Najib, who lost his step-grandmother in the tragedy, also thanked all parties, including foreign countries and the Disaster Victim Identification team that assisted in retrieving the remains of victims and the black boxes.

"The team members who managed to go in and recover the black boxes were brave. They did a wonderful job.

"I would like to thank the foreign countries that assisted us and Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein, who was acting transport minister, and Datuk Seri Liow Tiong Lai, who then took charge in handling the tragedy."

Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, cabinet ministers, representatives of ministries, departments and agencies, heads of foreign missions, next of kin of the victims and MAS management and crew were at the memorial ceremony, which marked the first anniversary of the tragedy.

They were shown a video presentation of the victims. The plane was carrying 298 passengers and crew when it was shot down in Ukraine on July 17 last year.

Tears flowed as 1,000 relatives and friends observed a moment of silence in memory of those dead.

The next of kin, who began to arrive as early as 8am, were ushered to their seats and were given a special ribbon each, reflecting the MAS uniform, to pin on their clothes. Additional reporting by Fareza Hanum Rashid



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak assuring the relatives that those responsible for downing Flight MH17 will be punished. He is flanked by Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin (right) and Transport Minister Datuk Seri Liow Tiong Lai.