

**SAR Operation Still On, No Trace Of MAS Plane Yet - Hishammuddin  
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SEPANG, March 8 (Bernama) -- A search-and-rescue (SAR) operation for the Beijing-bound Malaysia Airlines (MAS) plane is still underway, with no trace of the whereabouts of the MH370 flight.

Defence Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Tun Hussein said the Malaysian Government had also contacted the Vietnamese authorities to confirm reports that the plane had crashed in the sea, about 246km off the Thoa Chu island coastline in Vietnam.

"The SAR is continuing and there has been no trace (of the aircraft). Wisma Putra and the Civil Aviation Department have also not received any report stating the plane had crashed, which is all speculation.

"We have mobilised the relevant agencies to proceed to the last place it was reported missing (longitude 065515 north and 1033443 east) in the South China Sea waters.

"The last time the control tower received signal was at 1.30am," Hishammuddin, who is also acting transport minister, told a media conference here Saturday.

He said the government had also mobilised the air and navy forces, apart from the National Security Council and Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency to assist in the ongoing operation.

Several foreign media were quoted as saying the MAS plane with 239 passengers, including 12 crew members on board was reported to have crashed in the sea, about 246km off the coast of Tho Chu Island in Vietnam, naming Vietnamese Admiral Ngo Van Phat as having directed its navy force to rush to the location.

Hishammuddin said Malaysia was working closely with China, the Philippines and Vietnam in the SAR operation activated currently, adding that those countries also did not have any information.

"We will do our best with the co-operation of these countries, besides mobilising our relevant agencies," he said. He also advised the people not to believe in any speculation (pertaining to the aircraft) or speculate on the matter.

The main co-ordination centre is being operated at Sama-Sama Hotel here to report on the latest updates, on a two-hourly basis.

"MAS has also contacted 80 per cent of the passengers' families to provide the latest report and

discharged its responsibility of taking care of the affected family members' welfare and needs," said the defence minister.

Meanwhile, MAS chief executive officer Ahmad Jauhari Yahya said the incident did not affect other MAS flights as all flight operations were running as usual.

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