

**Search And Rescue Operation For MH370 Expanded To Straits Of Melaka - DCA
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SEPANG, March 8 (Bernama) -- The search and rescue operation for Malaysia Airlines (MAS) MH370 which was reported missing early Saturday in the South China Sea will be expanded to the Straits of Melaka.

The director-general of the Department of Civil Aviation (DCA), Datuk Azharuddin Abdul Rahman, said had sought the cooperation of the authorities in Vietnam and Singapore in the search.

"This is part of the standard operating procedures (SOP) because we have put our effort on the South China Sea and we are extending into the west coast of the peninsula," he told reporters here today.

Asked on the oil slick allegedly spotted in the Vietnamese water, Azharuddin said no confirmed report on it had been received and the department was waiting for response from the Vietnamese government.

According to news reports, the oil slicks were spotted late Saturday off the southern tip of Vietnam and suspected to be from the Malaysian aircraft.

"Yes, I read it from the news, but there is no official (reply from the Vietnamese government)," said Azharuddin.

He also dismissed any foul play leading to the disappearance of MH370, pointing that all security measures had been taken before the departure of the aircraft.

On a report by Italian wire service ANSA that an Italian national, who was named as one of the passengers on board the flight, was confirmed well and alive in Thailand by his parents but his parents, who also said that their son's passport was stolen in August last year, Azharuddin said the matter was being investigated.

Meanwhile, Malaysia Airlines Chief Executive Officer Ahmad Jauhari Yahya said the national carrier was aware of the stolen passport situation and the relevant authorities were looking into the matter.

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