

Air Force, Navy Lead SAR Op For Missing MH370, Scouring Area Expanded To Straits Of Melaka

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KUALA LUMPUR, March 9 (Bernama) -- For the first time the media conference on the latest developments about the missing Malaysia Airlines (MAS) plane MH370 was led by the armed forces.

The presence of Defence Forces chief Tan Sri Zulkifeli Mohd Zin and the Air Force chief Tan Sri Rodzali Daud at the media conference bore testimony that the armed forces were spearheading the massive search and rescue operations for the B777-200 Boeing aircraft which disappeared from the radar screen while flying over the South China Sea.

Zulkifeli said the search area has been widened to the north-west of the peninsula into Straits of Melaka waters, involving 40 ships and 22 aircraft from the Malaysian armed forces and foreign defence forces from China, the United States, Vietnam, Thailand, Indonesia and Singapore.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said yesterday the search and rescue operations have been widened up to the Vietnam border as the aircraft was not found within the 120 nautical miles east of Kota Baharu waters.

The Boeing 777-200 aircraft enroute from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing was reported to have lost contact at 2.40 am on Saturday, about two hours after taking off from the KL International Airport in Sepang.

Till this story is written, there is no sign whatsoever on the fate of the aircraft carrying 227 passengers from 14 countries, including 38 Malaysians, and 12 crew members.

At the same media conference, Department of Civil Aviation director-general Datuk Azaharuddin Abdul Rahman revealed a shocking news that two passengers had used a fake passport when they boarded the plane.

Following the startling disclosure, acting Transport Minister and Defence Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Tun Hussein said Malaysia had alerted anti-terrorism agencies in several countries of the two passengers.

According to media reports, the United States' Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) will send a team comprising agents and technical experts to assist in investigations into the missing MH370 as three passengers in the aircraft were Americans.

Meanwhile, MAS Group Chief Executive Officer Ahmad Jauhari Yahya said the national carrier had full confidence in its Boeing 777-200 and there was no plans to ground the fleet.

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