

## **Search For MH370 Expanded To 2.24 Million Square Nautical Miles**

**Bernama**

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SEPANG, March 18 (Bernama) -- The search and rescue (SAR) operation for the missing Malaysia Airlines (MAS) Flight MH370 has taken on a new international dimension covering the so-called Southern and Northern Corridors - a total of 2.24 million square nautical miles.

Acting Transport Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Tun Hussein said the area was enormous and it was something that Malaysia could not possibly search on its own.

"I am therefore, very pleased that so many countries have come forward to offer assistance and support to the search and rescue operation."

He said the search area for the northern and southern corridors were divided into seven quadrants, with each quadrant area measuring approximately 160,000 square nautical miles.

"The search is still co-ordinated by Malaysia while its partners had taken an increasing role in organising and carrying out operations, both within their own territory and also within agreed search sectors," he said in a press conference on the SAR progress here Tuesday.

The Beijing-bound Flight MH370, with 227 passengers and 12 crew members on board, disappeared about an hour after leaving the KL International Airport at 12.41am on March 8. It was scheduled to arrive in Beijing at 6.30am on the same day.

A multinational search for the aircraft has so far, drawn a blank.

Hishammuddin said on the logistics front, Malaysia worked hard round-the-clock with other countries to narrow the search corridors.

He said the search operation was focusing on four tasks; gathering information from satellite surveillance; analysis of surveillance radar data; increasing air and surface assets; and, increasing the number of technical and subject matter experts.

He said in the southern corridor, Australia and Indonesia agreed to take the lead in their respective parts of the search corridor, as well as in the northern corridor, while China and Kazakhstan agreed to lead in the search areas closest to their countries.

"On air and surface assets, I have spoken to almost all Asean leaders to request further support, including assets with deep ocean surveillance detection capabilities.

"We are also asking international partners who have assisted us before to take another look at their primary radar data," added Hishammuddin.

He said the Royal Malaysian Navy (RMN) deployed two more ships today to the southern corridor while the Royal Malaysian Air Force (RMAF) deployed two C-130 aircraft to the Indonesian sector of the southern search corridor.

Other countries contributing assets were the United States which had deployed one P-8 Poseidon aircraft, and would re-deploy a P-3 Orion aircraft, as well as Australia which had deployed three P-3 Orions and one C-130 Hercules.

New Zealand is redeploying a P-3 Orion to support Australian search efforts. The Republic of Korea has committed one P-3 Orion and one C-130 Hercules.

Japan has committed two P-3 Orions, two C-130s and one Gulfstream jet and the UAE has committed one C-17 aircraft and one Bombardier Dash-8 aircraft, said Hishammuddin, who is also defence minister.

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