

## **Penang told to be on standby to help in MH370 search and rescue efforts**

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**By Looi Sue-Chern**

Penang has been told to be on standby to assist in search and rescue efforts for the missing MH370 airplane, Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng said today.

Penang has been told to be on alert and to set up bases to assist in the search and rescue operations of the missing Malaysia Airline MH370 airplane that vanished seven days ago en route to Beijing, China, Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng said today.

He said these were instructions from the National Security Council at a meeting, and that the state government was not notified of anything else.

"We know that the US navy has sent one of its ships to the Strait of Malacca to search for MH370.

"We have heard of no new developments. For now, we have only been told to get ready and standby should our assistance is needed. Penang is ready to help if it comes to that," he told reporters.

State local government committee chairman Chow Kon Yeow said the authorities were told to attend the meeting with the National Security Council on Tuesday at the Royal Malaysian Air Force (RMAF) base in Teluk Air Tawar, Butterworth.

"Several locations in Penang may be enlisted to support and assist in the search and rescue operations," he said.

Sites that may be used are the RMAF base, Penang Port, Swettenham Pier, selected hospitals, and the Bertam stadium and the Dewan Millenium, both in Kepala Batas.

"The Dewan Millenium will serve as the international press centre," he added.

MH370 took off from the Kuala Lumpur International Airport at 12.40am last Saturday with 227 passengers of 14 nationalities and an all-Malaysian crew of 12. The plane was headed for Beijing.

The Boeing 777-200ER jetliner never reached its destination after it went off the radar at about 1.30am when flying above the South China Sea between the east coast of Peninsular Malaysia and the southern coast of Vietnam.

Vietnamese authorities have combed the area looking for signs of the missing plane since the incident but have so far not any found any evidence of the aircraft.

The search has been expanded to the Strait of Malacca on the west coast of the peninsula and up north to the Andaman Sea and the Indian Ocean.

This followed new information from the US which indicated that the missing airplane could have flown for several hours beyond the last transponder reading.

The new information has led to a decision to move the US Navy destroyer, the USS Kidd into the Indian Ocean to begin searching that area. – March 14, 2014.

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