

PM To Visit Pearce Air Force Base In Perth Wednesday
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KUALA LUMPUR, March 31 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak will be visiting Perth, Australia this Wednesday to see first hand the search operation on missing Malaysia Airlines (MAS) MH370 in the Indian Ocean.

"Our Prime Minister has decided to travel to Perth on Wednesday for a working visit to Pearce Air force base, to see the operation first hand and also to thank the personnel involved in the multinational search effort, including the Malaysian personnel," Acting Transport Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Tun Hussein told a media conference here today.

On search operations today, he said a total of 10 aircraft and 10 ships searched an area of 254,000 square kilometres in the southern Indian ocean.

Indonesia had given clearance for 94 sorties - by aircraft from nine different countries - to fly in its airspace, as part of this search, he added.

The Malaysian Boeing 777-200ER, with 239 passengers and crew on board, vanished on March 8, about an hour after the Kuala Lumpur-Beijing flight took off from the KL International Airport at 12.41am.

On March 24, Najib had announced that (the flight path of) Flight MH370 ended in a remote region of the southern Indian Ocean based on detailed analyses of satellite data.

The announcement had sparked frustration among many relatives of those on board the missing aircraft who called on the authorities to arrive at concrete evidence in their findings.

Hishammuddin, who is also Defence Minister, said he would be leaving for the United States Pacific Command headquarters in Hawaii Tuesday to attend the US-Asean Defence Ministers' meeting.

He said on behalf of the Malaysian Government, he would share with his Asean counterparts and the Government of the United States the latest developments on the search for MH370.

"I will convey to our ASEAN neighbours and the United States, Malaysia's utmost appreciation for their invaluable help in the multi-national search effort," he said.

He said he would also discuss the possibility of deploying more specific military assets, in the event that Malaysia needed to embark on a more complex phase of the operation.

On the relatives of those onboard MH370, he said the Government was due to hold a high-level briefing soon for these families, to update them on the latest developments regarding the search for MH370.

"We find ourselves in a difficult position. the question that the families principally want answered, is the question we simply do not have the answer to - namely, where their loved ones are, and where is MH370," he said.

He promised Malaysia would continue searching, and keep investigating, and would never give up until it found out what happened to MH370.

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