

Najib's Visit Bolsters Further Relations With Aussies

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PERTH, (Bernama) -- Australia has proved itself as 'a friend in need is a friend indeed' to Malaysia for its spontaneous action to search the missing Malaysia Airlines (MAS) MH370 flight without any timeline.

Australia's noble demeanour, has prompted Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak to thank the country as an 'invaluable friend' to Malaysia.

Najib during his two-day visit to Australia on last Thursday expressed his deep gratitude to his counterpart, Tony Abbott and 25 other countries that accepted Malaysia's request to assist in the search for the aircraft.

"We are also grateful to all those who have brought their expertise to bear on what Prime Minister Abbott rightly called 'one of the great mysteries of our time'," he told a joint press conference with Abbott.

Flight MH370, carrying 227 passengers and 12 crew, left the KL International Airport at 12.41am on March 8 and disappeared from radar screens about an hour later, while over the South China Sea. It was to have arrived in Beijing at 6.30am on the same day.

A multinational search was mounted for the aircraft, first in the South China Sea and then, after it was learned that the plane had veered off course, along two corridors - the northern corridor stretching from the border of Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan to northern Thailand, and the southern corridor, from Indonesia to the southern Indian Ocean.

Following an unprecedented type of analysis of satellite data, United Kingdom satellite telecommunications company Inmarsat and the UK Air Accidents Investigation Branch (AAIB) concluded that Flight MH370 flew along the southern corridor and that its last position was in the middle of the Indian Ocean, west of Perth, Australia.

Najib then announced on March 24, 17 days after the disappearance of the Boeing 777-200ER aircraft, that (the flight path of) Flight MH370 "ended in the southern Indian Ocean".

In fact Australian's sincerity had shone further when Abbot had previously agreed to participate in the investigation of the MH360 as Accredited Representative.

Australian Joint Agency Coordination Centre (JACC) (retired) Air Chief Marshal, Angus Houston said the country was drafting a comprehensive agreement for that purpose in accordance to

international law.

"Other than Australia, United Kingdom, The United States and China are also members of the Accredited Representative on the investigation," Houston told a press conference last Friday.

During the visit, Najib and Abbott also discussed on the need of underwater drone and other equipment for a new phase of the jetliner search.

A day later, JACC announced the deep sea search had begun while maintaining aerial hunt.

Houston said it was the first time that a sub-surface search had been conducted in the search, in an attempt to detect the signal from the black box of MH370.

"Using the Towed Pinger Locator (TPL) from the United States Navy on Australian Defence Vessel Ocean Shield and a similar capability on HMS Echo, the two ships will search a single 240-kilometre track, converging on each other," he said.

The deep sea search has yet to bear fruit as of Saturday there was no finding reported by JACC and the search was racing against time before the pinger went off.

The only development was on Saturday when a Chinese ship, Haixun 01, detected electronic pulse signals in the Indian Ocean.

However, Houston said the information has yet to be verified as they were still examining them.

Malaysia is always in gratitude to those involved in the search as Najib put it: "We recognised the efforts of the hundreds of men and women involved in the search."

"I know it is a daunting task to go out there in very inclement weather and in very challenging circumstances. Malaysia is indeed grateful for your courage and for your commitment," said Najib when visiting the Royal Australian Air Force Pearce base with Abbott recently.

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