

Stop delaying tactics, set up parliamentary select committee on MH370 now, says DAP

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By Eileen Ng

DAP has called on Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein to stop his "cat and mouse" game on the formation of a parliamentary select committee (PSC) on the missing Malaysia Airlines flight MH370 as this would further erode Malaysians' trust and confidence in Putrajaya's handling of the tragedy.

This comes on the heels of the latest opinion poll commissioned by The Malaysian Insider between March 24 and 30, which showed that 54% of the 1,092 respondents believed that Putrajaya was not transparent in releasing information about the flight that vanished 38 days ago.

DAP veteran leader Lim Kit Siang (pic) took Hishammuddin to task for taking the position that a PSC or a Royal Commission of Inquiry (RCI) would only be set up after the black boxes - which contains data and voice recorders - of the ill-fated aircraft were retrieved.

"This is a most unreasonable and unacceptable position.

"Does this mean that the government will oppose any independent, full-scale and comprehensive inquiry into the MH370 disaster if the black boxes are not recovered?

"This is why I am calling on Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak to convene an emergency Parliament sitting before May to establish a PSC on MH370, where Hishammuddin as the supremo of the search and rescue mission, should play no role in the investigation process," Lim said in a statement today.

In the latest poll, 54% of the respondents felt Putrajaya had been hiding information, while 26% said the government had been truthful and 20% were unsure over the MH370 issue.

Ever since the the Boeing 777 (9M-MRO) aircraft disappeared on March 8, this allegation has been made on numerous occasions by Chinese relatives of the 239 passengers and crew on board. Despite a multi-nation search for the aircraft, it has yet to be found.

Lim attributed the continued fall in trust and confidence in Putrajaya's handling of the missing aircraft to the "endless drips and drabs" of information being doled out.

This also included the ever-lengthening list of clarifications, confusions and contradictions, frequent twists and turns and “flip-flops” and the vast “black holes” in information in the past 38 days, he said.

"This not only aggravated the pain and anguish, but are most nerve-wracking for the families as well," Lim said.

He said this is best illustrated by the four confusions, twists and turns, and flip-flops in the past week, namely:

1. Did the RMAF (Royal Malaysian Air Force) scramble planes to try and locate flight MH370 in the early hours of March 8?

CNN stood by its report on Thursday night that the RMAF had scrambled its search aircraft at around 8am on March 8, but did not inform authorities until three days later despite the denial by Hishammuddin and RMAF chief General Rodzali Daud.

Lim said the RMAF's denial was lacking in credibility as up to now, the air force has not been able to come out with a coherent and credible account of what it had done in the initial hours to forestall or minimise the MH370 disaster.

2. No sense of guilt or remorse over the Deputy Defence Minister's irresponsible statement in Parliament.

Last Thursday, Parliament speaker Tan Sri Pandikar Amin Mulia Abdul Rahim had ruled that Deputy Defence Minister Datuk Abdul Rahim Bakri did not mislead the House over his assumption that the Subang air traffic control had ordered MH370 to turn back.

"There was no sense of guilt or remorse that the Deputy Defence Minister had plunged the Malaysian government and nation into a greater international crisis of confidence with such irresponsible and rubbish pronouncement," said the DAP parliamentary leader.

3. Co-pilot had made a telephone call when it was flying low near Penang?

In referring to English daily The New Straits Times report that MH370's co-pilot Fariq Abdul Hamid had tried to make a call from his mobile phone as the plane flew low near Penang before it went missing - a report which was subsequently denied by Hishammuddin and Communications and Multimedia Minister Datuk Seri Ahmad Shabery Cheek - Lim said this is another proof that the government's handling of the issue had suffered another major blow, especially since the newspaper is an Umno-owned publication.

"What's worse, the NST report of a 'mid-flight phone call' has given new life to various conspiracy theories, including the hijack theory which claims that flight MH370 is in Afghanistan and that the 239 passengers and crew are all alive.

"Is the Malaysian government giving credence to such conspiracy theories with the NST front-page report of the co-pilot's mid-flight phone call?" he asked.

4. Umno mouthpiece Utusan Malaysia's CIA conspiracy theory on MH370.

Lim said equally reprehensible was Mingguan Malaysia's endorsement of the conspiracy theory about US CIA involvement in a bid to sour relations between the US and China.

He said what was shocking was that it took Hishammuddin more than a week to refute the story.

"Both New Straits Times and Utusan became overnight 'celebrities' being the most quoted in the international media, but their media 'notoriety' was achieved at the expense of further blows in the prolonged international crisis of confidence at Malaysia's handling of the MH370 disaster," said the Gelang Patah MP. – April 14, 2014.

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