

Admit your mistake over MH370, Pakatan tells Najib
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By Jennifer Gomez

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak must admit that he made a mistake when he announced on March 24 that MH370 had ended in the southern Indian Ocean and later attempted to imply that he did not mean that the plane had crashed or that there were no survivors, opposition politicians said today.

DAP adviser Lim Kit Siang told reporters at the Parliament lobby that the mistake was obvious when Najib tabled a motion of sympathy for the families the day after making the announcement, implying that there were no survivors.

He said text messages were also sent out by MAS while its group chief executive Ahmad Jauhari Yahya had mentioned in a press conference that there were no survivors.

After the announcement caused anger and frustration among mainly families of the Chinese passengers, acting Transport Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein defended Najib by saying the prime minister did not say the plane had crashed or there were no survivors.

Relatives of passengers said Putrajaya should apologise for prematurely claiming that the plane had crashed.

Datuk Mahfuz Omar (Pas-Pokok Sena) wanted to know if the government would be taking action against local media which had reported that the plane had crashed in the Indian Ocean, and implied that all those on board had died.

"The acting transport minister said they were considering taking action against international media that carried false reports on the missing plane.

"Are they going to take action against the media that carried the reports suggesting there were no survivors?" he asked.

Lim said Putrajaya should have released the transcript of the communications from the cockpit of the missing jetliner at the start and not now after more than three weeks.

The Transport Ministry had said in a statement on Monday that "Good night, Malaysian three seven zero", was the last conversation between the air traffic controller and the cockpit of the missing jet.

It was previously reported that the last communication from the cockpit was "All right, good night".

The statement also said Hishammuddin had instructed the investigating team to release the full transcript, which made available during a briefing to the next-of-kin of MH370's passengers and crew.

Lim said he shared the anger and shame of Malaysians on the correction issued on the matter, following the revelation by China's CCTV that the last words were different from what the Department of Civil Aviation had originally revealed.

"This is another mistake that should not have happened. It reflects poorly on the competence and transparency of our system of governance."

He said the past 25 days since the plane went missing had exposed other mistakes and weaknesses, including the exact time the plane lost contact, on the air turn back and the Royal Malaysian Air Force's supposed assumption that the turn back was ordered by the control tower.

Given these conflicting statements by the authorities, Lim said it was imperative that a parliamentary select committee on MH370 be set up to investigate its disappearance.

Lim added that the latest Merdeka Center survey revealed that 50% of respondents were not happy with the authorities' handling of the MH370 crisis – something which should be taken seriously.

He said Putrajaya should not hit back at the rakyat by labelling them anti-nationalistic for expressing such views.

"It is because we love and take pride in how Malaysia is viewed in the eyes of the world, but it does not change the fact that the people have a lot of questions about the handling of the crisis," he said.

The survey carried out by the Merdeka Center for Opinion Research among 1,005 respondents revealed that only 43% were satisfied with the way Putrajaya was dealing with the issue.

The majority of Chinese and Indian respondents were dissatisfied, at 74% and 59% respectively. Only 18% of Chinese and 36% of Indian polled said they were satisfied.

But 63% of Malay respondents expressed satisfaction with the handling compared with 30% who said they were not. – April 2, 2014.

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