

Malaysia, China, Australia to Hold Trilateral Meeting on MH370 Search Operation
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KUALA LUMPUR, May 2 (Bernama) -- Come Monday, Malaysia, China and Australia will hold a trilateral meeting in Canberra, Australia to discuss the search operation for the missing Malaysia Airlines (MAS) Flight MH370 aircraft.

Acting Transport Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Tun Hussein said the meeting would discuss the approach in the deployment of assets, technical advice and engaging with the families of passengers and crew on board the Boeing 777-200ER plane.

Hishammuddin, who said he would leave for Australia this Sunday, said he was confident the search operation for MH370 "is on the right track" but admitted the challenges ahead were huge.

"...with more friends coming on board and more experts, to make sure we remain focused on what we are doing, I believe we will find MH370, sooner or later," he told a press conference on the progress of the search operation for the aircraft, here Friday.

Present at the press conference were Joint Agency Coordination Centre (JACC) Chief Coordinator, Air Chief Marshal Angus Houston, president of the French Aviation Accident Investigation Bureau (formerly head of the Air France 447 investigation team) Jean-Paul Troadec, Deputy Foreign Minister Datuk Hamzah Zainuddin and Deputy Defence Minister Datuk Abdul Rahim Bakri.

At the press conference, Houston said the trilateral meeting was very important as it would formalise the way ahead to ensure the search continued with urgency and did not cease at any stage.

On the preliminary meeting with Hishammuddin here today before the trilateral meeting in Canberra, he said: "We have been discussing some of the challenges involved in deep water search."

He also reiterated that the new focused underwater search would take about eight months and probably, even as long as 12 months, depending on the weather condition in the search area, and other issues.

"We are totally committed as three nations, (and) I believe we will find MH370, and I'm confident with an effective search (operation), we will eventually find the aircraft," he said.

Flight MH370, with 239 people on board, 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 plane, first in the South China Sea and then, after it was learnt that the plane had veered off course, and ended in the southern Indian Ocean.

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