

**Act On Lessons Learnt From MH370 Tragedy - Najib  
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KUALA LUMPUR, May 14 (Bernama) -- Acknowledging the government did not get everything right in dealing with the disappearance of Flight MH370, Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said Malaysia as well as the entire global aviation must learn and act on important lessons gleaned from the tragedy.

In an opinion piece carried by The Wall Street Journal, the prime minister said the plane vanished on March 8 at a moment that caused maximum confusion - between two countries' air traffic controls.

He also noted that it took air traffic controllers four hours to launch the search-and-rescue operation for the missing Malaysia Airlines jetliner.

"The search began about a third quicker than during the Air France Flight 447 tragedy in 2009. Nevertheless, the response time should and will be investigated," he said.

Beijing-bound Flight MH370 with 239 people aboard vanished from radar screens while over the South China Sea, about an hour after taking off from Kuala Lumpur.

A massive multinational search was launched, first in the South China Sea and later extended to the Strait of Melaka and Andaman Sea, before search teams shifted their attention to the waters off western Australia in the Southern Indian Ocean, half way to Antarctica.

"Nobody saw this coming, nobody knows why it happened and nobody knows precisely where it is. That, essentially, is the story of Flight MH370 - at least for now," Najib wrote in the influential publication.

He pointed out that despite the efforts of the world's brightest minds and best militaries, the search area remained huge as he cautioned that finding the plane in an incident that had been described as "bizarre" and "unprecedented" would be neither quick nor easy.

The tragedy, he said, had caused terrible anguish for the families of those onboard, with the lack of definitive proof such as wreckage of the plane making the disappearance all the more difficult to bear.

"Without physical evidence or a clear explanation as to why the tragedy happened, people's attention has naturally focused on the authorities - and Malaysia has borne the brunt of the criticism," the prime minister said.

However, Najib said he believed that, in the passage of time, Malaysia would be credited for

doing its best under near impossible circumstances.

Alluding to efforts to locate the missing Boeing 777-200 jetliner, he said it was no small feat for a country the size of Malaysia to overcome diplomatic and military sensitivities, and bring 26 different countries together to conduct one of the world's largest peacetime search operations.

"But we didn't get everything right. In the first few days after the plane disappeared, we were so focused on trying to find the aircraft that we did not prioritise our communications," Najib said.

He went on to say that none of this could have altered MH370's fate as he pledged that Malaysia would keep searching for the plane for as long as it took and continue facilitating the independent investigation to learn from any mistakes.

"We've already tightened airport security and investigators are looking for other measures to improve safety," he said.

Najib wrote that one of the most astonishing things about the tragedy was the revelation that a plane the size of a Boeing 777 could vanish, almost without a trace.

"In an age of smartphones and mobile Internet, real-time tracking of commercial airplanes is long overdue," Najib said as he alluded to Malaysia's preliminary report into MH370 which included a recommendation for real-time tracking of commercial aircraft.

He said after Air France 447 crashed into the Atlantic, investigators recommended that the airline industry introduce improvements that would help search teams quickly locate a crash site and reach any survivors but no action was taken.

Referring to the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) meeting in Montreal, Najib encouraged its members to push the recommendation on real-time tracking of airliners forward.

"We should also consider changing communications systems - namely transponders and Aircraft Communications Addressing and Reporting Systems (ACARS) - so they can't be disabled mid-air," he said.

Najib further suggested that the location pingers - which are activated if a plane crashes - should last at least 90 days, up from the current 30.

"If MH370's black box pinger had lasted for 90 days instead of 30, search teams may have been able to locate the plane by now," Najib said.

He also described as "wholly inadequate" the ability of today's black boxes to only record the last two hours of cockpit conversation.

"Given that a standard iPhone can record 24 hours of audio, surely the black box should have sufficient memory to record cockpit conversation for the full duration of any flight," he said.

Najib noted that when MH370's black box was finally recovered, the most important portion of the cockpit conversation - the minutes and hours after the plane first vanished - would not be available.

He further said that airliners' emergency locator transmitters, which emit a distress signal when a plane is in trouble, could also be improved as currently the devices did not work very well underwater, with their mandated battery life of just 24 hours.

Najib said the proposed changes might not have prevented the MH370 or Air France 447 tragedies but they would make it harder for an aircraft to simply disappear and easier to find any aircraft that did.

He drove home the point that the aviation industry must not only learn lessons of MH370 but implement them.

"The world learned from Air France but didn't act. The same mistake must not be made again," he concluded.

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