

**MH17 Tragedy: National Flag To Fly At Half-mast Until Monday - Najib
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KUALA LUMPUR, 19 July (Bernama) -- The government has decided that the national flag be flown at half-mast throughout the country beginning Friday night until Monday (July 21) following the tragedy that befell the Malaysia Airlines (MAS) flight MH17 that was believed to have been shot down in Ukraine Thursday.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said he had already informed the Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Abdul Halim Mu'adzam Shah about the tragic incident.

Speaking in a special message - MH17 Accident, which was carried live on RTM1, Najib called on all Malaysians, particularly the Muslims, regardless of their political ideology, to perform the 'hajat' prayer.

The Prime Minister said Malaysians of other races were also encouraged to hold their own prayers according to their respective beliefs.

He said the government also expressed great sadness and regret over the tragedy that befell the passengers and crew of the ill-fated aircraft.

Thus, he said, the government also wished to record its deepest sympathy and condolences to all family members, friends and acquaintances of the victims of the tragedy.

"It is hoped that everyone will be patient and strong in facing this severe challenge," he said.

Thursday, the MAS flight, MH17, was flying from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur when it went down in Ukraine. It was carrying 298 people - 283 passengers and 15 crew.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said early Friday that Ukrainian authorities believe that the Boeing 777, which also carried 43 Malaysian nationals including two infants, was shot down.

The MH17 was reported to have left Amsterdam at 12.15 pm (Netherlands time) Thursday and was to have arrived in Kuala Lumpur at 6.10 am (Malaysian time) Friday.

MAS, on July 18, has confirmed it received notification from Ukrainian ATC (air traffic control) that it had lost contact with flight MH17 at 1415 (GMT) at 30km from Tamak waypoint, approximately 50km from the Russia-Ukraine border.

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