

Gerakan mourns loss of youth wing member in MH17 crash
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BY EILEEN NG

Gerakan lost one of its members in the Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 that was shot down Thursday in eastern Ukraine.

Liew Yau Chee, who was a committee member of the party's Subang division youth wing, and his wife were on the doomed jetliner after a business trip that took them to London and Amsterdam.

Gerakan Youth deputy chief Andy Yong, who has known the couple since Liew joined the multi-racial Barisan Nasional party in 2004, said their families have been inconsolable upon learning that the two were among the 298 passengers killed when a surface-to-ground missile hit the Boeing 777 plane.

Besides their parents, the couple left behind a son and two daughters, aged 10, five and two respectively.

"His father is in a daze and finds it hard to believe the news. His mother has been crying non-stop, while his mother-in-law was very emotional during the briefing given by MAS.

"I was at their house yesterday and I overheard his eldest son telling his younger siblings 'daddy and mummy are not coming back anymore'. It was heartbreaking," he told The Malaysian Insider.

Describing Liew as a very close friend, Yong said they played badminton twice a week for the past 10 years.

He last saw the businessman on July 5 during a badminton game where he was his usual jovial self.

"He did not mention that he was going to London and Amsterdam, but we know that he goes to Europe often for business," he said.

He said Liew had posted a picture of himself in Germany on his Facebook page and his badminton mates were joking about him being in the country so soon after the Germans won the recently concluded Fifa World Cup.

"That was his last communication with us," Yong said.

He said some 11 Gerakan members led by national secretary-general Liang Teck Meng visited the family yesterday.

He said the party pledged to help the family to go through this difficult period.

"We will accompany the father to do some housekeeping matters, including giving DNA to help facilitate identification of the victims.

"We will also give them legal services and our president had agreed to the setting up of a fund to help the family if there is a need for it," he said.

Selangor Gerakan chief David Ang, meanwhile, said he had recruited Liew to join the Kota Damansara branch in 2004.

Ang said Liew was very supportive of the party's activities and he too, played badminton with him twice a week.

"He was a good friend, supporter and a very good comrade to us. To lose a good friend in such an unbelievable inhuman incident is something that had not crossed my mind. I am speechless," he said.

Flight MH17 was brought down by a ground-to-air missile. Those responsible for downing the jet have yet to be identified, with Russian and Ukrainian authorities blaming each other and the Russian-backed separatists.

Recovery of the bodies, as well as investigation of the wreckage, has been hampered by rebel separatists who prevented international observers from spending any length of time at the crash site. – July 20, 2014.

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