

Australia's Parliament Honours Those Lost In MH370 Mystery

Bernama

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CANBERRA, March 5 (Bernama) -- The Australian Parliament today observed a minute's silence ahead of the first anniversary on March 8 of the disappearance of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH370 with 239 passengers and crew while on a flight from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing.

In the presence of the Malaysian High Commissioner to Australia, Datuk Zainal Abidin Ahmad, and representatives of countries involved in the search for the aircraft, Prime Minister Tony Abbott said he could not promise the search would maintain its intensity of the past year.

But he promised the families who had loved ones on the flight that the Australian-led search mission would continue working as best it could to resolve what has been dubbed as "one of the greatest mysteries of our time".

Although Sunday will mark a year since the flight disappeared, Federal Parliament honoured the victims today - the last day of its sitting before it goes into recess for a week.

Abbott extended his sympathies to the families for their "harrowing" year of sorrow, and acknowledged the efforts of the search operation which so far has failed to provide them answers.

"We know these anniversaries are painful beyond words," Abbott said in his speech televised nationwide.

"The message of this Parliament to all of the families of MH370 is that you remain in our thoughts and prayers. To you - and to all those with loved ones aboard that flight - my pledge is that we are taking every reasonable step to bring your uncertainty to an end," Abbott said, describing the search operation as the biggest of its kind in history.

He also praised the search effort as an extraordinary example of international cooperation.

In the first few weeks, 28 search aircraft from Australia, New Zealand, China, Japan, Malaysia, South Korea and the United States completed 345 sorties into the southern Indian Ocean, he said, adding that ships from Australia, China, Malaysia, the United Kingdom and the United States also joined the search.

Based on satellite information, it was presumed that the flight had made a turnback and went missing over the southern Indian Ocean.

Abbott said that as the search from the air and on the surface reached its conclusion, Australia began the largest underwater search ever carried out, in an area that had never been mapped before.

He said that to add to the difficulty, the search zone was one of the world's roughest stretches of ocean.

Opposition Leader Bill Shorten said all Australians could sympathise with the MH370 families.

"Because all Australians have known this sadness, because all of us have walked this road, this parliament can say to you today that you're not alone."

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