

Putrajaya avoids picking sides in MH17 tragedy
Malaysian Insider
Nov 24, 2015

Transport Ministry today evaded stating Putrajaya's stand on whether Russia or Ukraine was responsible for bringing down Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 last July.

Its deputy minister Datuk Ab Aziz Kaprawi said the Dutch authorities were preparing a concept paper to identify the main elements for a draft treaty as discussed in a meeting in Canberra, Australia in September by the joint investigation team (JIT).

Chua Tian Chang (PKR-Batu) had asked Aziz to state Putrajaya's stand whether Ukraine or Russia was responsible for the tragedy.

"Ukraine and the Netherlands have stated that Russia is responsible.

"We want to know the government's stand, whether we agreed with that Russia is responsible.

"If we agree that Russia is responsible, then other than legal action, how do we intend to use diplomatic channels to inform them that we will not compromise on the safety of our people and assets.

"Many Western newspapers have reported that Malaysia was being soft on Russia due to the 22% boost in bilateral trade, and that is why we are not stating our stand," Chua said.

Aziz, however, reiterated his earlier answer, that based on a meeting in Canberra, Netherlands and Ukraine would be preparing two separate concept papers.

"So we will just go with the decision taken in the September 22 meeting."

Chua also asked the deputy minister to explain the claims in the Dutch Safety Board report that Malaysia had not given timely cooperation on the probe.

To this, Aziz said this was because at that point, Malaysia was not fully included in the JIT made up of the Netherlands, Australia and Ukraine.

"Our stand is we wanted to be fully included in the JIT and after we were included, we gave our full cooperation in the investigation.

Chua then suggested that the government cleared its name over the matter as the Dutch Safety Board report had mentioned that Malaysia hindered investigations.

He added that the report found Malaysia Airlines complied with its "legal obligations" on conducting international flights but had not made "additional efforts" to look at the dangers over eastern Ukraine during the well publicised conflict.

The report also mentioned, "From the start of the investigation it proved to be more complicated to organise interviews with employees of the Malaysian government and the airline in Kuala Lumpur, the same applied to obtaining the documents investigators requested (from) them."

On July 29, Russia used its veto right to block a five-nation proposal at the United Nations initiated by Malaysia, to establish an ad hoc criminal international tribunal to try those responsible for the downing of MH17.

The resolution obtained 11 votes of support, including from Chad, Chile, France, Jordan, Lithuania, Nigeria, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States. China, Venezuela and Angola, however, abstained from voting.

MH17 crashed in eastern Ukraine on July 17, 2014 as it flew from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur with 283 passengers and 15 crew members on board.

The Boeing 777-200 aircraft was shot down over Donetsk near the Russian border. – November 24, 2015.

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