

DCA officers sent to Madagascar

Kuala Lumpur– Several officers from the Department of Civil Aviation (DCA) have been sent to Madagascar to check on whether a piece of debris found on the island could be from Flight MH370, says Transport zminister Dato' Seri Liow Tiong Lai.

"We were contacted by the Madagascar authorites and I had directed our officers to called the debris from them.," he said after launching the World Matitime Day celebration here yesterday. "It is only one small piece." Liow also said the move to send DCA officers there was made in the wake of the killing of Zahid Raza, the Malaysian honorary consul in Madagascar, last month.

He noted that it was the standard operating procedure for either the debris to be couriered back to Malaysia or officersto be sent out to collect them. "In view of this case, where someone has been assassinated, instead of sending the debris back here (to Malaysia), we have sent officers there to retrieve it," he added. However, Liow said it was irresponsible to link Zahid's murder with MH370. I don't think that it (Zahid's murder) is related and it is premature to speculate as the case is stil under police investigation," he added.

Zagid was gunned down on Aug 24 in the island's capital Antananarivo. Madagascar police are still investigating the motive behind the crime as there was no report of robbery. Zahid a prominent businessman in Madagascar, was appointed honorary consul for a three year term in 2013.

Malaysia Airline Flight MH370 disappeared en route to Beijing from Kuala Lumpur on March 8, 2014, with 239 people on board. The plane was said to have ended its flight in the southern Indian ocean. Several pieces, believed to be that from the aircraft, have since washed up along Madagascar's coast, althought the crash site has yet to be located.

Earlier, during the event, Liow said efforts were being made to get more Malaysian-registered ships. Only about 5,000 Malaysians are working aboard such ships, with more than 6,000 being foreigners. Among the measures being made is to cut bureaucracy by amending the Malaysian Merchant Shipping Ordinance 1952 to get more Malaysian vessels to be registered.

Liow said such efforts were part of the Malaysia Shipping Mater Plan to further develop the nation's maritime industry.