

## **‘Reward for those who solve mystery’**

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KUALA LUMPUR: MALAYSIA has opened the gates for private entities to participate in the search for Malaysia Airlines Flight MH370. As Kuala Lumpur, Canberra and Beijing officially called off the exhaustive three-year search for the Boeing 777-200ER, which went missing with 239 people on board, the Malaysian government yesterday said it welcomed anyone with the expertise to try to solve “aviation’s greatest mystery”.

The Tripartite Joint Communiqué issued by the three governments on Tuesday, which declared the search “suspended”, said it “hoped that new information would soon emerge to help in locating the ill-fated aircraft”.

Canberra also yesterday said a strong new lead could revive the search, although the call would be Malaysia’s. NST Infographic The New Straits Times yesterday asked Deputy Transport Minister Datuk Abdul Aziz Kaprawi whether the government would allow private parties, including those who had different takes on how the search should have been done, to come in now that the search was over.

In the phone interview, Aziz said this could be done. “That is the first time that this proposal has come up. Yes, they can,” he said, adding that private entities with the right expertise, including deep-sea salvage operators, were free to contribute to the search.

Anyone who found the aircraft, which went off the radar on March 8, 2014, he said, would be rewarded. They can write in to the Transport Ministry before embarking on their mission. Aziz added that they must, however, meet several conditions, including that they bear all expenses involved in their search and that they must locate the aircraft’s fuselage.

He also told the NST that the government would raise with Australia and China the cash reward that would be paid out to the party that located the plane’s main wreckage.

“The reward will only be for the successful discovery of the fuselage... The companies will have to bear their own costs and expenses, and they are free to search for the plane anywhere,” he said without committing to the sum of the reward.

In the past, several private entities, including a sea-survey firm based in Adelaide, Australia, carried out an independent search in the Bay of Bengal. Many others with sonar capability have also carried out similar searches in areas they believed had become MH370’s final resting place.

Despite the suspension of the underwater search, experts have committed to keep probing for more clues on the plane’s whereabouts.