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**MH370 PRESS BRIEFING BY HISHAMMUDDIN HUSSEIN,
MINISTER OF DEFENCE AND ACTING MINISTER OF TRANSPORT**

1. Introduction

It's been almost a month since MH370 went missing.

The search operation has been difficult, challenging and complex.

In spite of all this, our determination remains undiminished.

We will continue the search with the same level of vigour and intensity.

We owe this to the families of those on board, and to the wider world.

We will continue to focus, with all our efforts, on finding the aircraft.

2. Investigation into MH370

As per the requirements set out by the ICAO in Annex 13 of the International Standards and Recommended Practices, Malaysia will continue to lead the investigation into MH370.

As per the ICAO standards, Malaysia will also appoint an independent 'Investigator In Charge' to lead an investigation team.

The investigation team will include three groups:

- an airworthiness group, to look at issues such as maintenance records, structures and systems;
- an operations group, to examine things such as flight recorders, operations and meteorology;
- and a medical and human factors group, to investigate issues such as psychology, pathology and survival factors.

The investigation team will also include accredited countries.

Malaysia has already asked Australia to be accredited to the investigation team, and they have accepted.

We will also include China, the United States, the United Kingdom and France as accredited representatives to the investigation team, along with other countries that we feel are in a position to help.

3. Formation of committees

In addition to the new investigation team mentioned above, the Government - in order to streamline and strengthen our on-going efforts - has established three ministerial committees.

Firstly, we have established a Next of Kin Committee. Hamzah Zainuddin, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, leads this committee.

This committee will oversee all aspects regarding the Next of Kin of those on board MH370, providing families with information on the search operation, and offering support after the search operation has been concluded.

The committee will co-ordinate with relevant foreign governments, and will complement the work already being done for the families by Malaysian Airlines.

The second committee oversees technicalities, specifically, the formation and the appointment of the investigation team. Abdul Aziz Kaprawi, the Deputy Minister of Transport, leads this committee.

The third committee takes over issues related to the deployment of assets for the search operation. Abdul Rahim Bakri, the Deputy Minister of Defence, leads this committee.

This committee will work with foreign counterparts involved in the search operation, and liaise closely with the Australian Joint Agency Co-ordination Centre.

4. US-ASEAN Defence Forum

This morning, I returned from the US-ASEAN Defence Forum, which I attended in my capacity as Defence Minister.

At the forum, I updated our ASEAN counterparts, and the United States, on the latest developments in the search for MH370.

I also spoke to officials from other countries involved in the multi-national search operation.

The spirit of co-operation at the meeting, and the support offered, was commendable.

During my bilateral meeting with US Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel, Secretary Hagel reiterated his commitment that the United States would continue to support the search operation, and will provide whatever assets are deemed necessary.

I thanked Secretary Hagel for the United States' unwavering support, which has included both the deployment of naval and air assets, sophisticated underwater search equipment, and assistance from the FBI, the NTSB and the FAA.

At the Forum, I also received strong support from our ASEAN partners in the search for MH370.

I would like to read out the joint statement issued by the ASEAN Ministers, which I believe underscores the tremendous spirit of co-operation within ASEAN, in the face of this difficult search operation:

"We, the Defence Ministers of the member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations express our deepest sympathies to the family members of the passengers and crew on board the missing Malaysia Airlines Flight MH370.

"We acknowledge that the member nations of ASEAN have participated in the search operations directly and indirectly since the plane went missing on 8th March 2014.

"From the South China Sea, the Andaman Sea to the Indian Ocean - ASEAN has continued to assist in every way possible, true to the spirit of regional cooperation and friendship without any hesitation in sharing of information, assets and expertise.

"We believe that Malaysia has done its level best in its response to this unprecedented predicament given the sheer scale of the Search and Rescue (SAR) operation which is the biggest and most complex we have ever seen.

"We reaffirm our commitment for greater cooperation between each member nation especially in the field of disaster management under the framework of the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response. This incident stressed upon us the importance of information and resource sharing as we strive to be in the utmost state of readiness in mitigating potential calamities and risks.

"ASEAN's unity will remain solid and is totally committed to assisting Malaysia in coordinating this massive SAR to locate MH370. We are resolute in finding a closure to this tragic chapter in aviation history. Our thoughts and prayers remain with the families in these difficult times."

5. Concluding remarks

Before I end, let me touch on some unfounded allegations made against Malaysia.

These allegations include the extraordinary assertion that Malaysian authorities were somehow complicit in what happened to MH370.

I should like to state, for the record, that these allegations are completely untrue.

As I have said before, the search for MH370 should be above politics.

And so I call on all Malaysians to unite; to stand by our armed forces as they work in difficult conditions, with their foreign counterparts, thousands of miles from home; and to support all those who are working tirelessly in the search for MH370.

Lastly, as I mentioned on Wednesday, while I was at the US-ASEAN Defence Forum, I spoke by telephone to the British Secretary of State for Defence, Phillip Hammond, regarding the nuclear-powered submarine HMS Tireless.

I hereby confirm that the submarine is now in the search area and helping in the search operation.

I shall now invite the Chief of the Defence Force to update you on the submarine's capabilities.

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