

# MH370 remains a mystery

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'Unlawful interference' possible, but real cause still unconfirmed

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**PUTRAJAYA:** The team investigating the safety aspects of MH370 has concluded that they are unable to determine the real cause of the disappearance of the plane but did not rule out the possibility that "unlawful interference" by a third party had caused the incident.

The Malaysian International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) Annex 13 Safety Investigation Team, which released its 449-page report after a four-year wait, also allayed concerns that their findings were final.

Chief investigator Datuk Kok Soo Chon said the team had analysed the pilot and first officer of the fateful MH370 plane on many aspects and found no abnormalities.

However, evidence such as the aircraft turn back, which was done manually, no malfunction and that the transponder was switched off "irresistibly" suggested unlawful interference, said Kok.

"Based on all that, we dare not exclude unlawful interference," he told a media briefing held at the Transport Ministry yesterday.

Flight MH370, which was travelling from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing, vanished on March 8, 2014, with 227 passengers and 12 crew on board.

The disappearance of the aircraft has been dubbed one of the greatest aviation mysteries of all time.

The report also quelled concerns over the pilot's possible role in the missing plane.

"We analysed the pilot and first officer on many aspects including behavioural, psychological, social and also their medical history. There were two psychiatrists in the team and they even viewed footages of the pilot and first officer before the flight.

"They concluded that there were no behavioural signs of social isolation, change in habits or interest, self-neglect, drug or alcohol abuse of the pilot-in-command and flight officer," said the report.

Kok told the media that background checks were also done on the crew and passengers of MH370 and all were given "a



**Final conclusion:** Kok (second right) showing the report during press conference in Putrajaya. With him are (from left) senior investigators Datuk Dr Mohd Shah Mahmood, Captain Abdul Wahab Ibrahim and Mohan Suppiah.

clean bill of health".

He said the Boeing 777 was fitted with four emergency locator transmitters (ELTs) and the search team could not detect any signals from the plane's ELTs.

"ELTs do not work if submerged under water, if cables are broken or its antenna is damaged," he said.

Kok said there was nothing unusual about MH370's ELTs not working and pointed out that in 170 air incidents recorded by the ICAO over the past 30 years, only 39 cases of signals from ELTs were detected.

On the aircraft underwater locator beacons, he said that although the battery for the equipment had expired in 2012, it could still function for a few days.

On the report, Kok pointed out that his team was only responsible to conduct the safety investigation while the judicial probe, as well as the search for the missing, was conducted by other authorities.

"This is not the final report. It would be

presumptuous of us to say the wreckage is found when there are no victims. There must be a closure," he said.

Earlier, the team held a briefing to the Malaysian next of kin. A similar session will be held in Beijing on Aug 3.

Kok explained that the report could not be released earlier as the search for the missing plane was ongoing.

"After the tripartite search ended, Ocean Infinity conducted a search. When this stopped in May, it gave us two months to prepare the report and here it is today," he said.

Kok said he was unaware of claims that the next of kin were given 48 hours' notice to attend the briefing as the team had no communication with them and neither did they call for a press conference as these matters were dealt with by different teams.

On the fate of the team, he said that with the release of the report, its members had agreed to offer termination of their contract within a month from now.



## Air traffic controllers did not follow the SOPs, says report

**PUTRAJAYA:** Air traffic controllers in Kuala Lumpur and Ho Chi Minh City did not act according to standard operating procedures on March 8, 2014, causing a significant delay in detecting the disappearance of Flight MH370.



# Families want search to continue

**PUTRAJAYA:** After two previously failed missions, family members of those on board Malaysia Airlines Flight MH370 have urged authorities not to stop the search for the ill-fated aircraft.

Voice 370, a group representing the next of kin, said the Malaysian Government should consider any offer by companies that were willing to conduct a deep-water search for the plane on a "no cure, no fee" basis.

"Our desire and only hope is that the search continues and that the plane is found so that such incidents can be prevented in the future.

"We would really like the Government of Malaysia to make it clear that the search for MH370 is not over and that they are open to receiving tenders of a no cure, no fee nature from companies that are adequately equipped to conduct a sea search.

"We believe Malaysia has nothing to lose with a no cure, no fee arrangement, because payment is only made if the plane is found.

"We must remember that millions of people fly every single day. Safety is not something to be taken lightly and I hope the Government seriously considers the implication that this can have on aviation travel," said Grace Nathan to reporters on behalf of Voice 370.

Grace is the daughter of Flight MH370 passenger Anne Daisy.

Yesterday, the next of kin were briefed by the safety investigation team before its report was released to the public.

Most of the family members expressed disappointment over the report, claiming it provided no closure and that questions remained unanswered on the whereabouts of Flight MH370.

"The plane departed Kuala Lumpur for

Beijing on March 8, 2014. It turned back and then disappeared. Where did it go and why did it disappear? We do not know.

"After the release of today's report, I do not think we are any wiser," said K.S. Narendran, whose wife was aboard the missing plane.

Intan Maizura Othman, the wife of flight attendant Mohd Hazrin Mohamad Hasnan, said the briefing was "disappointing" for the family members who attended.

"There was nothing new in the report. The safety investigation team said they were not

the ones who searched for the plane and were also not the ones with the authority to say if the search would be continued.

"We want to question those people then," she said.

A three-year search in the Indian Ocean for the plane was called off in January 2017 after no success.

US company Ocean Infinity offered to conduct a search on a "no cure, no fee" basis this year, but the renewed search also turned out to be futile.

According to the MH370 safety investigation report that was released yesterday, the blunder happened when the Beijing-bound Malaysia Airlines plane was about to enter Vietnamese airspace.

It was about the time when MH370 made the turn back.

The Kuala Lumpur air traffic control centre had transferred control of MH370 to its Vietnamese counterparts at 1.19am as the aircraft approached the Igari waypoint, three minutes earlier than when it should have.

"The Ho Chi Minh City air traffic control centre was not aware that MH370 had been transferred at 1.19am.

"Also, by transferring at 1.19am, the KL air traffic centre controller did not comply with established procedures," said Datuk Kok Soo Chon, the head of the safety investigation team at a media briefing here.

The report also stated that based on procedure, Ho Chi Minh City's air traffic controllers should have notified Kuala Lumpur it could not establish a two-way communication with MH370 within five minutes.

It, however, only did so at 1.39am, which meant that MH370 had gone off radar for a good 20 minutes before air traffic controllers were alerted.

"The air traffic controllers did not initiate the various emergency phases as required, thereby delaying the activation of the search and rescue operations," said Kok.

Kok added that there is no record to suggest that the air traffic controllers in Kuala Lumpur did not take any action to alert the Royal Military Air Force Joint Air Traffic Control Centre.

"There is also no evidence that the air traffic controllers in Kuala Lumpur had kept continuous watch on the radar display," he said.

Kok, however, stressed that the report was not assigning blame on any party for the disappearance of MH370.

**Strength in difficult**

**times:** Family members arriving for the MH370 briefing in Putrajaya. — Reuters

