

'Need to upgrade defence system'

KUALA LUMPUR: In light of the Malaysia Airlines MH370 tragedy, Defence Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Tun Hussein notes there is a need to upgrade the country's defence system to strengthen its security in the future.

He said such a move was needed in view of the necessity to disclose sensitive military radar information in the search for the Boeing 777-200ER aircraft which vanished on March 8.

"We've made a very courageous decision to put aside national security and interests by disclosing some of our sensitive military radar information in the early stages of the search and rescue mission.

"The situation now requires us to relook our needs in the future and, more importantly, we're also looking in the context of the Asean region as a group," he said.

He told reporters this after witnessing the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between Global Komited Sdn Bhd, a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Weststar Group of Companies, and Thales UK here Monday.

Aimed at promoting, marketing and distributing a wide range of ground-based air defence systems to the Malaysian armed forces, the MoU was inked at the

Defence Services Asia Exhibition and Conference (DSA) 2014.

To a question, Hishammuddin said that surveillance technology was an area of interest, given what had happened in the MH370 incident.

The aircraft with 239 passengers and crew on board disappeared from radar screens while over the South China Sea,

about an hour into its Kuala Lumpur-Beijing flight on March 8. It was to have arrived in Beijing at 6.30am on the same day.

Analysis of satellite data indicated that the aircraft, which veered thousands of kilometres off its intended flight path, flew along what is called the 'southern corridor' in the direction of the Indian Ocean.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak announced on March 24 - 17 days after the plane's disappearance - that Flight MH370 "ended in the southern Indian Ocean". The hunt for the plane continues there.

Noting that Malaysia was due to take over Asean's chairmanship next year,

Hishammuddin said one Asean country on its own would not be able to deal with future threats.

"We need creativity in our approach, working more closely towards preventing threats that may jeopardise the security of our region," he said.

The minister said the sector also promised more job opportunities and might contribute in strengthening Asean's economic outlook.

Hishammuddin pointed out that at the end of the day, the defence industry was not just about making money as it should also be about making the world a more peaceful place.

On DSA 2014, he said the timing of the event was just right, given that it gathered all relevant hardware under one roof.

Earlier, Hishammuddin toured the booths at DSA 2014, billed as Asia's largest defence exhibition. The four-day show ends on April 17 at the Putra World Trade Centre. - Bernama