

Satellite imagery shows 122 'potential objects'

KUALA LUMPUR: The Malaysian Remote Sensing Agency (MRSA) has identified 122 "potential objects" that could be linked to the missing Malaysia Airlines Flight MH370 in an area of the southern Indian Ocean, about 2,557km from Perth.

The MRSA had analysed satellite images provided by France's Airbus Defence and Space.

Acting Transport Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein said the new development supported "the most credible lead" for focusing the search in the southern Indian Ocean, alluding to the analysis of British investigators that pointed to the area.

The objects were in an area of about 400sq km, he told the daily press conference at the Putra World Trade Centre here yesterday.

"Some objects are a metre in length, others as much as 23m long. Some of the objects appeared to be bright, indicating they are possibly solid," he said.

Hishammuddin, who is also Defence Minister, added that the MRSA findings were immediately forwarded to the Australian Rescue Co-ordination Centre in Perth.

"It must be emphasised that we cannot tell whether the potential objects are from MH370.

"Nevertheless, this is another new lead that will help direct the search operation," he said.

Hishammuddin said the search operation now had four separate satellite leads, from

Australia, China and France, showing possible debris.

What had to be done now was to determine whether it was really debris and linked to MH370, he added.

Hishammuddin said Australia was leading the search effort in the southern Indian Ocean while Malaysia continued its coordinating role.

"Australia has divided the search area into two sectors: East and West.

"With the improved weather, 12 planes were deployed to the search area – six in the East sector and six in the West," he said.

In the East sector, the search would be conducted by one Australian P3 Orion, and three Australian civilian aircraft, one Chinese Ilyushin IL-76 and one New Zealand P3 Orion.

Involved in the West sector were a US P8 Poseidon, two Australian P3 Orions and one each from South Korea and Japan as well as a civilian aircraft.

Hishammuddin also said an international working group was helping refine Inmarsat data to further narrow the search area.

The working group – consisting of Inmarsat, the UK Air Accidents Investigation Branch, Civil Aviation Administration of China, the US National Transportation Safety Board and Federal Aviation Administration, Boeing and Rolls Royce as well as the relevant Malaysian authorities – will attempt to determine more accurately the final position of MH370.