

COMMENT

Mathematical sciences to the rescue

GIVE DUE CREDIT:

Crisis management of MH370, too, must be lauded

TRUTH is stranger than fiction. Theory reflects reality, yet realities are only glimpses of what was, is or will be. What is created by the human mind can be truths as perceptions, points of views.

The human mind created *Space Odyssey* (Arthur C. Clarke), *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* and *Journey to the Centre of the Earth* (Jules Verne).

Beliefs are all true to the believers. Fictions of the mind are true to those who hold them to be truths. Real drama and mysteries are abstract reconstructions of reality and of truths, presented as maps, mathematics, mind matters, tangible evidence of ends and reconstructions of past journeys.

The realities of lessons from the unprecedented crisis management of the search-and-rescue (SAR) for Malaysia Airlines flight MH370 are as follows:

THE goodwill of friendly governments, not as yet calculating the combined expenses that will be in the billions;

THE state of scientific-technological literacies among citizens across the globe, specifically among government leaders and media practitioners;

THE myths of universal coun-

selling and competencies of counsellors across cultures of religious and non-religious societies and families;

THE primacy of focus on SAR as separate from, but simultaneous with, criminal investigations;

THE necessity of international insurance, for nations can lose vast and unimaginable resources over tragedies like MH370; and,

ELITES, administrations and governments can exert control on their peoples, but beyond their borders of political control, complex realities are beyond the small minds of mortal manipulators.

In the midst of the high drama is the humble and, yet, proud disciplines of Mathematics, Arithmetic and Calculus, the Queen of the Sciences.

Abstract mathematics has solved all kinds of problems of matter and energy. Together with other sciences like Geography, Earth Sciences, Weather, Geostrategic Sciences, History and Engineering, Mathematics has advanced human civilisation.

Institutions like Britain's Inmarsat and Air Accidents Investigation Branch have come to contribute to the public's understanding of aeronautics surveillance, et cetera. It is not just governments that have strategic leading knowledge, but also companies, inviting industrial espionage. We know of the FBI, Interpol, Scotland Yard and other partnerships.

Continuous curriculum review at all levels of education must ensure scientific and technology literacies for all in order for citizens to make sense of the sciences around them.



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Tactical coordinator **Imray Cooray** aboard a Royal Australian Air Force AP-3C Orion aircraft searching for MH370 over the southern Indian Ocean on Wednesday. Reuters pic

A large scientific vocabulary has come to emerge, including civilian and military radars, black box, transponder, ping, Doppler effect and state-of-the-art equipment.

As searchers try to detect the black box, people detect the human heart at the individual level of prayers for all or at the institutionalised-religion level of prayer for believers.

The basic question that emerges is whether all beings are part of the human tragedy or the infidels will remain eternal foes under whatever circumstances. On the whole, there is genuine empathy for all, regardless of colour, creed, national origin, gender and status.

Whatever real or perceived criticisms to the overall management of response to the crisis, we should be grateful to a number of people: the nations and their leaders, who have come to assist; the professionalism of some media players;

the international experts who have thrown light on the sciences, histories and politics surrounding the incident; the agencies of government; and, all the supportive services that backed the SAR efforts.

Under the trying circumstances of paucity of facts, acquisition of bits and pieces of developing information; and misinformation from various experts and uncertainties, Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein (Defence Minister and acting Transport Minister), Datuk Azharuddin Abdul Rahman (Department of Civil Aviation director-general) and Ahmad Jauhari Yahya (MAS chief executive officer) have carried the burden of the nation with dignity in a professional manner, emphasising the consistency of the search and simultaneous sensitivities of the relatives and friends of passengers and crew from different cultural, family and religious backgrounds.

The tragedy will take a different focus and different directions, and involve different protagonists. It may be one of those events that will not have closure, but of which documentaries and dramas will be written about.

What is happening in unprecedented ways is the test of being a developed nation, not just in terms of income, basic facilities and infrastructure, but of assets and asset deployment; land, air, sea and human capital; and, intellectual assets utilised optimally.

Most of all, national responses are about dominant national mindsets and evidence of capacities.

A case like MH370 is about what we know, what we can know, what we do not know yet and what we will never know — the limits of human knowledge and possibilities of further knowledge expansion.

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