

'DVI team finishes tasks despite challenges'

PUTRAJAYA: The Disaster Victims Identification (DVI) team has completed 99 per cent of the forensic investigation at the crash site of downed Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17 in Donetsk, Ukraine.

Police principal assistant director (DNA Databank and DVI Commander) Assistant Commissioner Hussein Omar Khan said the team had completed the mission to the best of their ability, given the time constraint due to the area being in a conflict zone.

He said the unit had a police team (to recover physical evidence and human remains), a pathologist and an odontologist (for post-mortem and identification process), fingerprint and DNA specialists from the Chemistry Department, an army specialist and a religious department representative.

"The goal was to return as many victims or human remains and personal belongings back to Malaysia as soon as possible," he said after the International Conference on Environmental Forensics 2015 (iEnforce 2015) organised by Universiti Putra



Malaysia's Environment Faculty here yesterday.

The second iEnforce conference was held from Aug 19 to 20 to discuss the importance of environmental forensic identification and source of contamination.

At the conference, Hussein presented a talk entitled "Mass Fatality Investigation on MH17", where he shared his experience of being part of the DVI team.

He said in the final stages of the investigation, they found 296 victims, but there were two unidentified victims.

"We tried to dig deeper at the site, working on the probability that the victims were buried due to the crash impact.

"Despite digging two feet beneath the surface, we could not find any more remains.

"After nine months, we recovered 3,700 human bones and wreckage fragments," he said, adding that the crash site had since been replanted with grass and a sign erected to commemorate the tragedy.

He said apart from the cold weather and language barrier, the main challenge was the crash site being in a conflict zone.

He said despite a ceasefire, protective gear and armoured vehicles, there was an air of danger as they could hear artillery and gunshots, which led to the Australian team pulling out in April, leaving the Malaysian and Dutch teams continuing the investigation.

MH17 was en route from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur when it went down over Ukraine on July 17 last year, killing 298 passengers and crew, 43 of them Malaysians.