

Putrajaya: MAS crash reports unverified
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The Royal Malaysian Navy is now verifying information with the Vietnamese Navy on a news report that the wreckage of Malaysia Airlines flight MH370 has been spotted off the coast of a Vietnamese island.

Defence and Acting Transport Minister Hishammuddin Hussein said the RMN has been instructed to do so despite the Foreign Ministry and Department of Civil Aviation denying the reports.

"On the wreckage found off an island on the southern side of Vietnam, the DCA and our foreign office has said it is not true.

"But since the (news) report quoted the Vietnam Navy, (the Royal Malaysian Navy) is getting confirmation," Hishammuddin told reporters at KL International Airport this afternoon.

He said confirmation would be made within the next two hours.

Asked about speculation of a terrorist act or bombs on board, the minister said: "We have no information on that but we do not discount any possibility."

Meanwhile, Department of Civil Aviation director Azharuddin Abdul Rahman clarified that the Subang Air Control Traffic lost radar contact with the Boeing 777-200 aircraft at 1.30am and not 2.40am as stated by MAS earlier.

MAS CEO Ahmad Jauhari Yahya also clarified that there are five Indian nationals and seven Indonesian nationals on the flight, and not 12 Indonesians as earlier stated.

239 passengers and crew on board

MH370 departed from KLIA at 12.40 this morning and was due to arrive in Beijing at 6.30am.

On board are 239 passengers and crew, including 152 Chinese nationals plus an infant, 38 Malaysians, seven Indonesians, seven Australians, five Indian nationals, three French nationals, three Americans plus an infant, two Canadians, two New Zealand nationals, two Ukrainians, a Russian, an Italian, a Taiwanese, a Dutch national and an Austrian.

Azharuddin said the last contact with the aircraft was when the plane, which is 11 years and 10 months old, was some 120 nautical miles off Kota Bharu.

Pilot Zaharie Ahmad Shah, 53, is a Malaysian with 18,365 flying hours behind him. He joined MAS in 1981.

First officer Fariq Abdul Hamid, 27, joined MAS in 2007 and has 2,763 flying hours.

MAS has informed 80 percent of the passengers' next-of-kin and said the public can get further information at +603-78841234 or visit the MAS **website**.

"Our thoughts and prayers are with all the affected crew and passengers and their families," Ahmad Jauhari said.

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