

MAS pilot lodged complaint after hitting ducks, says CEO

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KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia Airlines Group (MAS) Chief Executive Officer Ahmad Jauhari Yahya today rebuffed earlier news reports claiming that the Kathmandu-bound MH144 pilot failed to report on a potential disaster when the aircraft struck a flock of ducks during touchdown at the Tribhuvan International Airport late last week.

He said the pilot had immediately lodged a report on the incident to Air Traffic Controller (ATC) soon after the incident. The plane sustained only a broken light damage in the incident.

“I can confirm to you that the news report was not true. The pilot directly informed the incident to the ATC soon after the accident and submitted a report upon landing.

“The flock of ducks had flown above the aircraft and hit the landing lights, and broke it,” Jauhari told the daily media conference held to update on the status of the missing MH370.

Earlier reports claimed that MAS aircraft ferrying 180 passengers and crew dodged away from a potential air disaster last Friday night when a flock of ducks struck the aircraft’s windshield during touchdown on the runway of the Tribhuvan International Airport.

Nepal’s news portal kantipuronline.com quoted airport authorities as saying on Saturday that the impact left the southern tip of Runway 02 strewn with broken glass although there were no report of injury on board the Kathmandu-bound MH-144 aircraft from Kuala Lumpur in the incident which occurred at 10.45pm.

MH066’s technical issue

In another separate incident, Jauhari also clarified that flight MH066 bound to Seoul was diverted to Hong Kong due to an inoperative aircraft generator and that the incident was merely a technical issue rather than a safety problem.

Asked if MAS had failed to follow safety procedures, Jauhari said that the incident was merely a slight technical issue and dismissed the claim.

“We had technical problem with the generator so the plane was diverted to Hong Kong. It was not a safety issue but more to technical issues,” he added.

According to Bernama, MAS media relations manager Kharunnisak Dzun Nurin said in a statement on Monday that the Airbus A330-300 aircraft landed in Hong Kong “uneventfully”.

Electrical power continued to be supplied by the auxiliary power unit, she said.

“The aircraft was then diverted to Hong Kong for rectification and landed uneventfully,” she

added.

MH066 left Kuala Lumpur at 11.37pm on Sunday and was scheduled to arrive at Incheon International Airport at 6.50am (5.50am local time) on Monday.

Co-pilot competent

On missing MH370, Ahmad Jauhari reiterated that MAS had always been stringent with its pilot and co-pilot selection.

He said the 27-year-old co-pilot Fariq Abdul Hamid had undergone five fleet trainings, which he duly passed, before taking the air again on MH370, which went missing on a flight from the Kuala Lumpur International Airport to Beijing, China.

Jauhari said Fariq was on his sixth fleet training under the supervision of experienced pilot Capt Zaharie Ahmad Shah.

“MAS has always been strict in selecting its pilot and co-pilot. Fariq had undergone five trainings before this and he managed to pass all five test. MH370 was his sixth fleet flying,” he said.

MH370 went missing from civilian radar an hour after takeoff when it was flying over the South China Sea. The aircraft was picked up by military radar an hour later in the western side of peninsula Malaysia flying towards the Andaman Sea.

The flight transponder which tracks the plane was switched off internally. Investigators now believe that the flight was flying over the Indian Ocean, based on the ‘pings’ sent out by the plane which was picked up by satellite feeds.

The plane is suspected to have flown some five hours before its “pings” went missing. Most of the passengers on board were Chinese nationals. The focus of the search now is centered some 2,500km southwest of the Australian city of Perth.

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