

MH370 Plane Sank In Indian Ocean In Almost One Piece, Claims Satcom Expert Bernama

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By Norshazlina Nor'azman

KUALA LUMPUR (Bernama) -- The missing MH370 aircraft is believed to be "largely intact" and lying somewhere beneath the southern Indian Ocean, according to local satellite communications expert Zaa'im Redha Abdul Rahman.

His theory is that it sank into the deep sea in one piece "after probably floating for a while" on that fateful day the plane went down.

"I believe that when the aircraft went out of fuel, it glided downwards and landed on the water with a soft impact...that's why I believe the plane is still largely intact," said Zaa'im Redha who had, immediately after MH370 went missing, helped to read and deduce its flight data relayed via the satellite operated by United Kingdom-based global satellite communications firm Inmarsat.

Based on the analysis of data relayed between MH370 and the ground station by the Inmarsat satellite, investigators concluded that the flight had ended in the southern Indian Ocean.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak made an announcement to that effect on March 24 last year, 17 days after the Beijing-bound MH370 vanished from the radar.

UNLIKELY TO FIND SMALL PIECES OF DEBRIS

Speaking to Bernama in an interview recently, Zaa'im Redha said his theory that the plane probably "glided down" was supported by evidence in the form of the integrity of the two-metre-long flaperon, which was discovered on Reunion Island in the Indian Ocean and confirmed to be part of the missing MH370 plane.

"It (the flaperon) was only slightly damaged and was just encrusted with barnacles. Its appearance indicates that it was not violently torn off from the aircraft's main body...it does seem that it got detached pretty nicely at its edges," he explained.

Zaa'im Redha, who is now principal consultant at Zeta Resources Sdn Bhd - which provides, among others, satellite communications consulting and engineering services - used to be part of the pioneering team at Measat which was responsible for developing and launching Malaysia's first satellite.

He had previously worked for NEC Japan, where he led a multinational team to design and develop the Inmarsat-P ICO System (Generation 4), a MOBILE satellite communications system.

Elaborating how the size of debris from an air disaster would be consistent with the impact

of the crash, Zaaim Redha pointed out to the Germanwings Flight 9525 crash in the French Alps in March this year, saying that none of its debris had exceeded one-foot (about 0.3 metre) in length due to the hard impact.

"If MH370 had crashed with a really hard impact, we would have seen small pieces of debris floating on the sea immediately after that. Furthermore, the flaperon that was recovered (from Reunion Island) wouldn't have been in one piece...we would have only seen bits and pieces of it," he said.

He firmly believed that after gliding onto the water, the MH370 aircraft had "floated for a while" before sinking into the deep sea "in one piece".

He added that it was also not impossible for an aircraft to float on water as proven by US Airways Flight 1549, which had to opt for an emergency landing on the Hudson River after multiple bird strikes caused both its jet engines to fail in January 2009.

SUBMERGED BENEATH THE OCEAN

"It's possible that the (MH370) aircraft may have been submerged deep inside the ocean for quite some time before the flaperon (a part of the plane's wing) got detached itself.

"Similarly, other parts would also become detached and float with the help of the strong water current, before being washed up on the shores of islands like Reunion," he said.

On whether it was possible for the flaperon to have floated on water for over 4,000 kilometres before ending up on Reunion Island, Zaaim Redha said it was plausible based on sea current modelling by oceanography experts.

"Going by how the earth rotates, it's highly possible that the piece of debris could have floated (over a long distance) because the ocean current can be really powerful.

"One cannot underestimate the power of the ocean current...recently, a Russian woman who was considered one of the greatest freedivers of all time failed to surface after a dive in the Mediterranean and she is feared to have encountered a strong underwater current."

On March 8 last year, the Beijing-bound MAS Boeing 777-200ER aircraft with 239 passengers and crew members on board disappeared from the radar about 49 minutes after taking off from the Kuala Lumpur International Airport at 12.41am.

Recently on July 29, an aircraft wing part, called a flaperon, was discovered on the shores of the French governed Reunion Island in the Indian Ocean. Later, on Aug 6, Najib announced that international experts had affirmed that the maintenance record seal on the aircraft part provided the conclusive proof that it belonged to MH370.

Investigators, who scrutinised the shoreline of the remote island after the finding also found more debris, including a seat cushion, window pane, as well as remnants of a

suitcase and empty water bottles.

But it is still unclear whether the latest items belonged to the missing plane.

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