

## MOZAMBIQUE DEBRIS 'ALMOST CERTAINLY FROM MH370'

**SYDNEY:** Two pieces of debris found in Mozambique are "almost certainly from MH370", Australia said yesterday, after technical analysis provided the latest clue to the fate of the missing Malaysia Airlines aircraft. Until the latest discoveries, only a wing part recovered from a beach on the Indian Ocean island of Reunion which lies to the east of Mozambique had been confirmed as coming from the plane which disappeared two years ago. "The analysis has concluded the debris is almost certainly from MH370," Transport Minister Darren Chester said, adding that Malaysian investigators had found the pieces were consistent with panels from a Malaysia Airlines Boeing 777 aircraft.

"That such debris has been found on the east coast of Africa is consistent with drift modeling performed by (national science body) CSIRO and further affirms our search efforts in the southern Indian Ocean." The two pieces are a flat grey fragment with the words "No Step" printed along one side, found on a sandbank, and a metre-long piece of metal picked up by a holidaymaker.

Australia is leading the search for MH370 in the remote Indian Ocean, where the Kuala Lumpur-Beijing flight is believed

to have diverted when it disappeared on March 8, 2014 carrying 239 passengers and crew. Another piece of debris yet to be identified as coming from the missing jet was picked up near Mossel Bay, a small town in Western Cape province, South African authorities said Tuesday. They did not reveal when it was found. Malaysia is working with South African officials to arrange for the examination of the fragment, which Australia's Joint Agency Coordination Centre (JACC) said on Wednesday was "suspected to be the cowl from an engine". Mossel Bay lies more than 2,000 kilometres (1,250 miles) from Vilankulo, the Mozambican resort where one of the pieces being examined in Australia was found.

### 'Search for MH370 continues'

Specialists, including from Australia and Boeing, have been conducting investigations in Canberra alongside the Malaysia team on the two items after they were found in Mozambique. When a two-meter-long (almost seven-foot) flaperon part washed up on a beach on the French overseas territory of La Reunion in July, it was the first concrete evidence that MH370 met a tragic end. The Australian Transport



**KUALA LUMPUR :** A construction worker (top) walks behind a mural dedicated to missing Malaysia Airlines flight MH370, on a wall next to a parking lot in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. — AFP

Safety Bureau (ATSB), the agency leading the search, had said then that its location was consistent with drift modeling of where debris might have floated.

Chester said the hunt for the crash site, far off Australia's southwest coast, would continue. "There are 25,000 square kilometers (9,650 square miles) of the underwater search area still to be searched. We are focused on completing this task and

remain hopeful the aircraft will be found," he said. Three vessels contracted from Dutch firm Fugro-Fugro Discovery, Fugro Equator and Havila Harmony-along with Chinese ship Dong Hai Jiu 101 are

scouring the ocean depths, with the plane believed to have sunk up to 4,000 meters (13,100 feet). The search has been projected to cost up to Aus\$180 million (US\$130 million). — AFP

## INDIAN JOURNALIST ARRESTED OVER SOCIAL MEDIA POST

'INDIA RANKED AS THE SEVENTH MOST DANGEROUS PLACE FOR JOURNALISTS IN 2015'

**NEW DELHI:** An Indian newspaper journalist has been arrested after allegedly posting an "inflammatory" message on social media, police said yesterday. Prabhat Singh had criticized police in a WhatsApp post about the situation in Bastar region of eastern Chhattisgarh state, where rights groups say journalists are facing official harassment from security forces. Last year two journalists in the region were arrested under anti-terror laws over stories that allegedly supported Maoist rebels waging a long-running insurgency against the government in Chhattisgarh. DM Awasthi, director general of the Chhattisgarh police anti-Maoist operations, said Singh "was arrested on a complaint over an inflammatory post".

"We have charged him under relevant sections," he told AFP. Singh's lawyer told AFP his client had been beaten in custody and denied food. "The text messages were critical of police and of some elements close to the establishment," Kshitij Dube added. His arrest came a month after freelance journalist Malini Subramaniam said she was forced to flee the region after she was threatened and her house was attacked over her critical coverage of the local police.

Subramaniam had reported extensively on human rights violations and allegations of sexual violence by security forces in the Bastar region. Bastar is one of the strongholds of Maoist rebels fighting the Indian government for land, jobs and other rights for millions of poor tribal groups spread across the country. On Wednesday India's National Human Rights Commission, a quasi-judicial body, asked authorities in Chhattisgarh to provide a report on Singh's arrest and alleged torture.

The US based Committee to Protect Journalists (CJP) and Amnesty International

have also urged the authorities to release Singh. Amnesty said the authorities "must respect the crucial work of the media and human rights defenders and refrain from apparent attempts to silence them through arbitrary arrests and torture". India was ranked as the seventh most dangerous place for journalists in 2015, according to an

International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) report. The country's Maoist insurgency began in the 1960s and has cost thousands of lives. The rebels operate in at least 20 Indian states but are most active in the forested and resource-rich areas of Chhattisgarh, Orissa, Bihar, Jharkhand and Maharashtra. — AFP

## ALABAMA GOVERNOR DENIES AFFAIRS, BUT ADMITS HE MADE SOME REMARKS

**MONTGOMERY, Alabama:** Alabama Gov Robert Bentley admitted on Wednesday that he made inappropriate remarks to a top female staffer, but he denied accusations that he had a physical affair. The governor's admission capped a bizarre political day. A day after his firing, Bentley's former law enforcement secretary and one-time close friend made public the content of a clandestine recording and accused his former boss of having an inappropriate relationship with the staffer. The recording was made by a family member before Bentley's wife filed for divorce last year.

The two-term Republican governor, a former Baptist deacon, acknowledged in a conciliatory news conference that he said "some inappropriate things" to his senior political adviser, Rebekah Caldwell Mason. "I made a mistake. Two years ago I made a mistake," Bentley said, adding that he had previously apologized to his family and to Mason and her family. "Today I want to apologize to the people of the state of Alabama and once again, I want to apologize to my family. I am truly sorry, and I accept full responsibility."

Former Law Enforcement Secretary Spencer Collier held a news conference

Wednesday and said he heard a tape recording in 2014 in which Bentley made romantic and sexually charged comments to a woman he believed to be Mason. Collier said he listened to the call while members of Bentley's family were present on the phone. Collier said the Bentley family was trying to do some sort of "intervention" with the governor with the recording. Collier said he confronted the governor about the recording and relationship the next day.

### Demonstrated gender bias

"Gov Robert Bentley simply hung his head and asked for advice on how to get out of it," Collier said. Collier and Bentley became close friends when they served together in the Alabama House of Representatives. Collier said Bentley recently told him he was "madly in love" with Mason. However, Collier conceded he had no direct evidence of a physical affair. Bentley, 73, said that although he made inappropriate remarks to Mason, he never had a physical affair with her. Collier also said Mason, who is considered one of Bentley's closest advisers, wields extraordinary influence within the governor's office. — AP

## FROM TRUMP TO REFUGEES: RIPPLE EFFECTS OF BRUSSELS ATTACK

**PARIS:** As Brussels reels from an attack by Islamic State jihadists, analysts warn of a ripple effect that could further whip up populist sentiment on the continent and in the United States. Across the Atlantic Ocean, Tuesday's bombings in the Belgian capital have provided fodder for Donald Trump's divisive electoral campaign while in Europe they risk hardening responses to the refugee crisis. Analysts warn that at a time when unity is more crucial than ever, the attack could create divisions that will make it harder to tackle IS and the crises it has spawned. "The risk is a spiral where our reaction to this very real threat makes matters worse, not better," said Thomas Wright, an analyst at the Brookings Institution's Centre on the United States and Europe. So what could the fallout be from the latest IS attack?

### Refugee crisis

Over one million refugees and migrants, nearly half of them Syrian, arrived in Europe last year alone, creating an unprecedented crisis that has created deep rifts between EU members over how to respond. Public opinion was already hardening against the refugees as their numbers swelled, and news that jihadists may have used the migrant route to re-enter Europe has added to concerns. Several EU countries have re-imposed border controls and limited the number of migrants they will accept, leaving thousands stuck in grim conditions at European crossings. The attack on Brussels, which left 31 dead, was likely to make matters worse for the refugees, with Poland's Prime Minister Beata Szydlo quick to say her country would no longer take in the agreed 7,000 refugees. "The refugee and terrorist crises are completely different topics but obviously public opinion links them," said Dominique Moisi of the French Institute for International Relations.

"The more you see terrorist activities the less you want to see refugees, which is very unfair for the refugees but this is part of the emotional response of public opinion." Wright said a tougher stance on migrants would do little to prevent further attacks. "Many of these terrorists are already residents or citizens of Europe. They wouldn't be stopped by tougher migration laws," he told AFP.

### Rise of right-wing populists

The refugee crisis and Islamic State threat have pushed voters into the arms of right-wing parties. One has already taken power in Poland, while others are experiencing a surge in support from Slovakia to Sweden, Austria to France. The latest attack could deepen support for such parties. "It seems like it could play into the hands of the populists and the nationalists. Their message of closing borders, of greater intolerance may have added resonance after the attacks," said Wright. However, he said their policies would be "counterproductive". "The answer is not to reimpose borders, target Muslim communities or pull out of the European Union—the answer is increased co-operation between countries, engaging Muslim communities and isolating IS." — AP