

MMEA's Bombardier CL-415 grounded due to poor visibility, water bombing mission to resume by Saturday

THE BORNEO POST ON SEPTEMBER 19, 2019, THURSDAY AT 2:53 PM



The MMEA Bombardier CL-415 last saw action during the Kuala Baram peat soil and forest fires. File Photo

KUCHING: Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA) Sarawak director First Admiral Robert Teh Geok Chuan said the flight mission involving the Bombardier CL-415 aircraft to put out forest fires that was scheduled on Wednesday will be postponed to Saturday.

The aircraft owned by MMEA is now at the Air Force base here undergoing routine maintenance.

Teh said the water bombing operation was halted on Wednesday because of limited visibility and other obstacles, forcing the operation team to instead conduct area reconnaissance ahead of their mission.

“Today (Thursday) and tomorrow (Friday) we will conduct routine maintenance in Kuching and the aircraft is expected to be operational by 12pm on Saturday. It will resume (its mission) after the routine maintenance. It will take 45 minutes to fly from the Air Force base here (Kuching) to Sri Aman,” he told The Borneo Post today.

According to news agency Bernama on Wednesday, the water bombing operation using the aircraft at Kampung STC Sri Aman had to be postponed due to “unavoidable circumstances”.

Quoting Sarawak Fire Assistant Director (Operations) Tiong Ling Hii, the report said the low tide in the river as well as fishing activities and passing boats had made it difficult for the aircraft to fly low and obtain water.

The CL-415 aircraft specialises in scooping up water and can drop a total of 6,000 litres of water on a single run without having to return to base.

It is able to refill its load in about 12 seconds in a body of water, which includes the open sea, rivers or lakes.

“In addition, the aircraft has also reached its flight time limit and requires maintenance before returning to operation. The operation will continue once the river is completely free of all obstacles and the aircraft is ready to fly,” Tiong was quoted as saying.