

**MH370: About 40 Percent Of Priority Search Area Has Been Covered - JACC  
Bernama  
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KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 25 (Bernama) -- The search and recovery (SAR) operations for the missing Malaysia Airlines (MAS) flight MH370 in the remote area of the Indian Ocean has covered over 24,000 square kilometres of the seafloor, which is around 40 per cent of the priority search area.

The Australian Joint Agency Coordination Centre (JACC) said the current underwater search area may be largely completed around May, assuming there are no other significant delays with vessels, equipment or from the weather.

Two ships are currently conducting underwater search and recovery (SAR), and two more ships are on the way to assist in the SAR, it said in a statement today.

It said the Malaysian contracted vessel, Go Phoenix and Malaysia-Australia contracted vessel, Fugro Discovery are currently in the search area conducting underwater search operations.

Fugro Equator, which departed Fremantle for the search area on Feb 20, is expected to arrive in the search area tomorrow, Feb 26, and Fugro Supporter departed last Saturday and is expected to arrive in the search area on Sunday, it said.

"In addition to locating the aircraft, the underwater search aims to map the MH370 debris field in order to identify and prioritise the recovery of specific aircraft components, including flight recorders, which will assist the Malaysian investigation," it said.

JACC said the Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB) has utilised the data from the bathymetric survey work to prepare the initial plan for the underwater search, to be followed and referred to by all parties involved.

"The plan includes search timings, methods, procedures, safety precautions and the initial search areas for the various vessels," it said.

Touching on the weather, it said weather conditions in the search area are expected to be favourable this week, with sea states anticipated to rise no higher than 3.

"A tropical low currently in the vicinity of the Cocos (Keeling) Islands is predicted to deepen and move to the south or south-west over the coming week. The low pressure system could potentially become a tropical cyclone and may bring strong winds and heavy seas to the search area from as early as next weekend," it said.

Overall conditions are expected to continue to be generally favourable during the warmer months, it added.

Yesterday, Transport Minister Datuk Seri Liow Tiong Lai said the search would continue and the data provided by Inmarsat and the Air Traffic Control Centre showed that MH370 was heading towards the Southern Indian Ocean.

The Boeing 777 flight MH370 with its 12 crew and 227 passengers disappeared from the radar screen while en route from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing, about an hour after departing the KL International Airport at about 12.41 am on March 8 last year.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak announced on March 24 last year that flight MH370 had ended in a secluded spot in the Southern Indian Ocean.

On Jan 29 this year, the Malaysian Department of Civil Aviation announced that the misfortune was an accident based on international aviation rules and all 239 of its passengers and crew perished.

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