

## **Malaysia prepared to deploy more assets to fight forest fires, says minister**

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Malaysia is prepared to deploy more military assets as well as assets from relevant agencies to help douse the forest fires in Indonesia.

Defence Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein said discussions had been held with the relevant agencies, including the Fire and Rescue Department.

"I have discussed with (Minister of Urban Wellbeing, Housing and Local Government) Datuk Abdul Rahman Dahlan on how the Fire and Rescue Department and the smart team can help us, and on how we can deploy more aircraft, like the Hercules C130, for cloud seeding in Indonesia," he told reporters at the Parliament lobby today.

He said the Bombardier CL 415 belonging to the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA) had been deployed to douse forest fires in Indonesia, adding that the aircraft was now back in the country for maintenance.

"The Bombardier is back for maintenance for a while only because in this region only Malaysia has the aircraft.

"We have two, but one is under maintenance. God willing, we can deploy the aircraft back to Indonesia end of the year," he said.

Considering that shortage of assets was the main problem in efforts to douse the fires in Indonesia, Hishammuddin suggested the republic seek the assistance of non-Asean member countries like Japan.

"But it is not our call, but Indonesia's. We can propose to them, and at the moment they are identifying, including Japan, to help. If that is not enough, we have to look beyond that," he said.

Meanwhile, Abdul Rahman, when met by reporters, said the ministry was prepared to deploy 1,200 personnel and assets, including helicopters, from the Fire and Rescue Department to help douse the fires in Indonesia.

"We are now waiting for permission from the Indonesian government to send our firemen. We leave it to Prime Minister (Datuk Seri Najib Razak) to discuss the matter," he said.

He added that if permission was granted, Malaysia would also send its smart team to focus on rescue efforts, should the need arise.

"The use of aircraft to douse the fire is good, but what is most effective is by individuals at the site of the fire because the fire is under the peat soil and we need people to dig the soil to douse the flame," he said. – Bernama, October 21, 2015.

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