

'Keep wau away from airports'

FLIGHT HAZARD: They endanger planes and helicopters, says aviation firm

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WAUS or kites are still flying near the Sultan Ismail Petra Airport in Pengkalán Chepa, near here, despite a campaign by aviation transport service provider Weststar Aviation Services to curb the practice.

Its chief operating officer, Datuk Jamil Osman, said the action not only endangered light planes operating at the airport but also Weststar, which provides helicopter services to the oil and gas industry.

Weststar started the campaign after two incidents in March and April, where kite strings became entangled in the rotors of two of its helicopters during night landings.

The incidents cost the company more than RM100,000 in repairs.

Jamil said a plane from Asia Pacific Flight Training, a flight training

school based at the airport, and a Firefly flight had encountered the same problem.

"Wau or kite flying is a tradition that must be preserved but it should not be played near the airport. We have taken steps, including launching a campaign against flying kites, in the area to ensure that no harm is done to aircraft taking off and landing.

"Kite flying had caused accidents in other places, including in the Philippines (in 2007), and we want to prevent it from happening here," he said after presenting prizes to the winners of an art competition held in conjunction with the campaign.

The Department of Civil Aviation's Kuala Lumpur Air Traffic Control centre director, Jamil Khir Mohamed, said under civil aviation regulations, kite flying was not allowed within 5km of an airport and 50m above the ground.

Athirah Auni Mohd Yassin of SK Semut Api won the art competition, while the second and third prizes went to Mazlenyana Mohd Stofa of SK Kedai Buloh 1 and Sharifah Nur Insyirah Syed Al-Jofree of SK Redang respectively.

The winners and their schools received plaques, certificates, cash and other prizes.