

SUN 27 AUG 2001

## Any increase in border patrols must be discussed first, says Najib

**KUALA LUMPUR, Sun:** An increase in patrols at the country's borders must be discussed with the police, army, customs and immigration departments, and various other bodies before it is undertaken.

Defence Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said today that it will be a difficult task to undertake as the borders with Thailand, Indonesia

and the Philippines are at least 500,000km long.

He was commenting on Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's statement yesterday that the increase in patrols is necessary to curb the smuggling of weapons into Malaysia from neighbouring countries.

Mahathir said some of the smuggled weapons are

sought by militant groups in the country.

On the tasks ahead, Najib said: "Three things must be done. They must be planned in detail, we must decide the resource capabilities of all these bodies and we must coordinate our activities.

"If we have good information, the task will be much easier because we

can then know the key areas we should focus on."

Asked about the contribution of the Armed Forces to the task, he said it will depend on the size of the undertaking.

However, he said, there are currently four battalions at the border with Thailand, including members of the Territorial Army.

"This (border patrol) is not our main function. Our job is to defend the nation against attacks from outside but we know that this is a serious problem.

"We believe that militant groups are trying to increase their store of weapons, so it will not be surprising if they have strong overseas networks to bring in weapons," he said.