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'Armed forces will do what it takes to defend sovereignty'

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - Malaysia will do whatever is necessary to defend its sovereignty if there is a preemptive strike or other military activity

on its territory, Defence Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said today.

Najib said the armed forces would use all its resources to defend the sovereignty should any country decide to implement its concept of forward defence or pre-emptive strikes on land, in air or by sea.

Najib said the domestic security agencies were capable of dealing with any military or terrorist activities.

He was commenting on Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's statement yesterday that certain countries in the region would consider Malaysia as their battlefield in the event of war.

The Prime Minister said these countries believed that by doing this, they would be able to prevent war from reaching their borders but he did not name the countries concerned.

Najib told a Press conference at Mindef, in the presence of armed forces

chief Jen Tan Sri Zahidi Zainuddin, that Dr Mahathir must have some basis

for making the statement.

Najib declined to comment on whether the Malaysian intelligence services

had detected any activity by foreign intelligence services in the country.

"Matters of intelligence, we do not reveal to the public," he said.

Najib said although the military was not on alert in anticipation of any

strike, it remained vigilant always.

Meanwhile, a investigation has been ordered into the incident where a sailor fell off the Royal Malaysian Navy vessel KD Sri Melaka on Dec 27.

Najib said the probe would look into the circumstances which led to Laskar Muda Norli Azhan Atan, 20, falling off the vessel.

Norli, who has served the RMN for about a year, survived for 32 hours in

the choppy waters and was found by a group of Filipino fishermen near Pulau Sibutu about 4am on Sunday.

He was handed over to Philippines authorities and picked up by the RMN vessel KD Sri Sabah on Tuesday.

Speaking to reporters in Sabah, Norli attributed his survival to basic training and a life jacket worn by him.

Najib said Norli had been taken back to the RMN base in Lumut.

In Kuala Terengganu, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said Malaysia was satisfied with its relations with other Asean member countries but would voice its displeasure with some countries on certain issues.

Malaysia would express its view if there was something wrong being committed by certain countries.

Syed Hamid said Malaysia had also played a positive role in Asean to

create a zone of peace, freedom and neutrality in the region and its open attitude would foster closer ties with its neighbours.

On the Pulau Batu Puteh territorial dispute with Singapore, Syed Hamid said the ministry submitted a memorandum of protest to the Singapore Government two days ago.