

Presence of fighter jets part of exercise

BY SIMON KHOO

PEKAN: The public should not be unduly alarmed if they see foreign fighter jets in Malaysian airspace.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said that the presence of these fighter jets was from an ongoing military exercise under the Five-Power Defence Arrangement (FPDA).

"There is no airspace intrusion by fighter jets from Singapore. The presence of fighter jets in parts of Johor is part of the integrated military exercise of the five member countries, includ-

ing Malaysia.

"A total of 23 vessels and 86 fighter jets and submarines are taking part in the exercise, which started early this month," he said after closing an education outreach programme for orang asli pupils in SK Runchang near here yesterday.

He was asked about the sightings of fighter jets over Kampung Pasir Putih, Tanjung Langsat, Kota Masai and its vicinity by residents, who had also lodged complaints over the deafening sound.

The other members of the FPDA are

Singapore, Australia, New Zealand and Britain.

The joint exercise is aimed at exposing the armed forces to operating under a multinational environment as well as handling the latest defence equipment.

Najib, who is also the Defence Minister, said the Government had given its consent for the usage of its airspace for the exercise.

On the deployment of peacekeeping troops to Lebanon, Najib said they had yet to receive a formal notice to go ahead.

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He said the majority of the soldiers would be from the 4th Mechanised Brigade based in Kuantan.

"The deployment consists of 200 soldiers in charge of administration and logistics and another 160 with special movement duties," he added.

On Putera Umno's insistence to hold a mammoth gathering involving Mat Rempit, Najib said he had yet to meet and discuss the matter with Umno Youth chief Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Tun Hussein.

Police have yet to issue a permit for the gathering due to security reasons.