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PRIME NEWS

Najib to visit oil rig turned floating base

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FIRST LINE OF DEFENCE: PM to get a closer look at Tun Sharifah Rodziah forward base

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P RIME Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak will get a closer look at key defence assets positioned off the east coast of Sabah to stave off cross border threats today.

Najib, who arrived here last night, will visit the Tun Sharifah Rodziah forward base off Lahad Datu, as well as attend the groundbreaking ceremony for a new helicopter base.

Both were pledges put in place to

strengthen frontline defence against criminal elements involved in terrorism, kidnap for ransom and smuggling activities, as well as to deter an influx of illegal immigrants.

Najib will be accompanied by Sabah Chief Minister Datuk Seri Musa Aman and Defence Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein.

The Tun Sharifah Rodziah base is a decommissioned oil rig that has been turned into a security asset. It has been operational since July last year.

Together with the Tun Azizan forward base, a decommissioned commercial ship modified for a similar purpose, it is one of two sea-based assets.

In a visit last year, Hishammuddin had said both offshore assets acted as the first line of defence against terrorist threats and for the collection of tactical intelligence, as well as a frontline operation base, and to provide logistic as-



The Tun Sharifah Rodziah forward base, a decommissioned oil rig that has been turned into a security asset, off Lahad Datu, Sabah. Pic by Malai Rosmah Tuah

sistance to patrol boats.

The two sea-based assets also assist in coordinating operations in threatened areas, as helicopter operation platforms and rendezvous points for fast-response teams.

Hishammuddin revealed that both bases were equipped with state-of-the-art communication systems, radar and operational fittings to optimise its presence as a defence component of Eastern

Sabah Security Command, or Esscom.

Esscom was launched in 2013 following the Lahad Datu intrusion by followers of the self-proclaimed Sulu Sultanate, from the southern Philippines.

Kidnap-for-ransom groups have also struck in several locations.

The latest attack was in the waters off Semporna, in which four men from Sarawak were taken by

an armed group in April and are being held hostage in southern Philippines.

Najib will also launch the Tawau-Semporna Pan-Borneo Highway construction work at SMK Balung in Tawau.

The route is part of a 706km stretch to be built in the first phase of the ambitious project, launched last month by Najib in Kampung Andus, Papar.