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# 'Safety of Sabah waters a priority'

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## Security tactic changes have proven effective in foiling kidnap threats, says PM

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**LAHAD DATU:** Tactic changes spelt success for Malaysian security forces when three kidnap-for-ransom group members were killed near here about two weeks ago, the Prime Minister said.

Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said the shooting of the cross-border criminals also showed the preparedness of the security personnel in dealing with threats in the east coast of Sabah.

"We are serious in dealing with cross-border criminals and protecting the sovereignty of our territory," he said.

Najib was commenting on the recent brazen kidnapping and robbing spree after attending the launch of the Lahad Datu portion of the Pan Borneo Highway.

He said the Eastern Sabah Security Command (Esscom), tasked with overseeing security in the state's east coast, would use any approach necessary to get the job done.

"Make no mistake, making our waters safe is our priority," he added.

On Dec 8, security forces shot dead three gunmen after they snatched two fishermen and robbed the crew of three trawlers.

The gunmen were about to attack a fourth fishing trawler when they encountered the elite Malaysian



**Massive project:** Najib and Musa (left) being briefed by Fadillah (in blue) on the Pan Borneo Highway during the launch of the project at SMK Sepagaya in Lahad Datu. — Bernama

police squad Tiger Platoon, which were lying in wait on the vessel.

Among those reportedly killed in the shootout were Abraham Hamid – described as a kidnap kingpin by the Philippine military – and a cross-border smuggler identified

only as Albaris.

Security forces were tracking down one of the captives and two gunmen who went missing during the gun battle.

Earlier, Najib said he wanted the massive Pan Borneo Highway to be

remembered as a legacy of his tenure as Prime Minister.

"I want the people of Sabah to remember that during my prime ministership, the Pan Borneo Highway became a reality," he said.

Najib said development was pos-

sible because of the close working relationship between the Federal Government and the state.

"The leaders of both governments have a common goal of wanting to see real changes that would benefit Sabahans," he said, adding that all the Opposition could do was spread slander and sow confusion among the people.

Najib also reminded the project contractors to be fair to the sub-contractors and ensure timely payments.

An earthquake-proof bridge is among the unique features of the 7km-long section of the Pan Borneo Highway, which will be built at Sepagaya near Lahad Datu.

The stretch of the highway would cut the travelling distance between Sandakan and Tawau by 10km.

The Works Ministry said part of the highway would be a 32m bridge spanning Sungai Sepagaya and the structure would be built by taking seismic design criteria into account.

The highway is expected to boost economic activities in the east coast district and benefit industries within the Lahad Datu Palm Oil industrial cluster.

Farmers would find it easier to transport their produce such as cocoa and oil palm to the market, the ministry said.

Among those present at the launch were Chief Minister Datuk Seri Musa Aman and Works Minister Datuk Seri Fadillah Yusof.