

Desert Warfare Know-how will be Advantageous to Malaysia – Najib

Bernama

March 3, 2016

From Abdul Muin Abdul Majid

RIYADH, March 3 (Bernama) -- Having honed its skills in jungle warfare, Malaysia stands to gain valuable lessons in desert warfare, thanks to its participation in a military exercise in northern Saudi Arabia, said Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

The Malaysian prime minister noted that threats nowadays could rear their ugly heads from all sorts of environments and circumstances.

"We need to be able to operate in different surroundings such as desert warfare and urban warfare, both of which we're still not there yet," Najib told Malaysian press Wednesday night as he concluded his working visit to Saudi Arabia which started on Feb 29.

He noted that the capability of the Malaysian armed forces had over the years been focused on jungle warfare.

Najib had earlier in the day visited a group of Malaysian Armed Forces personnel taking part in the 'Thunder of the North' military drill in the Hafar Al Batin training ground. It involves 20 countries.

Describing the military exercise as "very useful", Najib said it would also contribute in enhancing military interoperability among Muslim countries.

"We have interoperability in the context of the Five-Power Defence Arrangements (FPDA) and certain countries in ASEAN. But we don't have this capability among Muslim countries," the prime minister said.

The FPDA involves Australia, Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore and the United Kingdom.

"Our involvement in the exercise will precisely nudge us closer to developing this capability which, I think, is timely given current developments," he said of the Saudi Arabia-led Thunder of the North.

Elaborating, Najib said efforts by Saudi Arabia, which is facing its own militancy problems, in ensuring peace and security should be supported.

"Saudi Arabia is an important country for Muslims, hence we need to back it and one way of

doing it is by joining in the military exercise," Najib said.

Besides showing a clear signal of solidarity between the 19 participating Muslims countries and Saudi Arabia, it also served as a platform to strengthen solidarity in the Muslim world itself, he said.

"It's important for us to ensure that other like-minded Muslim countries continue to deepen cooperation in facing and addressing any threats to the Muslim community," he said.

Najib is scheduled to leave Saudi Arabia Thursday morning.

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