

**ESSZONE Safe and Under Control – Najib  
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KUALA LUMPUR, March 30 (Bernama) -- Security forces are constantly on the alert against any threat in the Eastern Sabah Security Zone (ESSZONE) even though the area is currently safe and protected, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

He said security forces through the relevant agencies such as the Armed Forces (ATM), Royal Malaysian Police (PDRM) and Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA) was ready to face any eventuality, including information on kidnapping attempts.

"ESSCOM (Eastern Sabah Security Command) is always determined to have zero intrusion and kidnapping from occurring but threats such as 'kidnap for ransom' can still happen if we are less vigilant," he said during the question- and-answer session at the Dewan Rakyat sitting here Wednesday.

He was replying to Datuk Raimee Unggi (BN-Tenom) who wanted the Prime Minister to state the security level, including infrastructure for security personnel in the ESSZONE although three years had passed since the intrusion incident by a group of terrorists in Kampung Tanduo, Lahad Datu.

Najib said since the last kidnapping on May 14 last year, ESSCOM managed to foil several kidnapping attempts with current capabilities and infrastructure.

He said various initiatives to strengthen ESSZONE security had and are being taken, including beefing up security posts in the islands that had resorts by increasing troops and equipment as well as the presence of vessels along the ESSZONE waters to an average of 85 per day from 39 daily previously.

Najib said other measures included optimising the use of technology surveillance - Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV), aircraft and radar in equipping maritime operations and intensify enforcement operations at sea and on land daily in high-risk areas and routes.

In addition, he said the security forces also enhanced and gathered information for domestic and cross border as well as held engagements with the community via two programmes, namely the Gerak Saraf Perang Saraf (Psychological Warfare) and ESSCOM.

"All these initiatives are dynamic whereby the control planning and implementation, commissioning and operations are constantly reviewed from time to time," he said.

He said over the past three years, ESSCOM had repaired and upgraded 35 security posts throughout ESSCOM besides constructing infrastructure for the deployment of two battalions, the General Operations Force (GOF) and ATM.

Najib, who is Pekan Member of Parliament, said ESSCOM had also developed the ESSCOM Fusion Centre with Phase two and Phase three to proceed under the 11th Malaysia Plan.

He said the government had also provided funding for improving the radar surveillance system and the acquisition of 92 boats of various types to equip the vacuum that existed throughout the ESSZONE.

"Even though the current infrastructure is lacking, it does not affect operations and follow up improvements can increase the effectiveness of operations in the ESSZONE," he added.

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