

Khaled: Malaysia to boost presence at Pulau Layang-Layang to guard sovereignty

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Speaking during a working visit to the island yesterday, Khaled said the government remained committed to strengthening security, operational and administrative functions at Pulau Layang-Layang and throughout the Gugusan Semarang Peninjau (GSP). - Courtesy pic

KOTA KINABALU: Malaysia will continue strengthening its presence at Pulau Layang-Layang to safeguard its sovereignty, sovereign rights, and strategic interests in the South China Sea.

Defence Minister Datuk Seri Mohamed Khaled Nordin said the island was more than just a military outpost, serving as a manifestation of the country's continuous presence, effective administration and commitment to defending its interests in one of the world's most strategically contested maritime regions.

Speaking during a working visit to the island yesterday, Khaled said the government remained committed to strengthening security, operational and administrative functions at Pulau Layang-Layang and throughout the Gugusan Semarang Peninjau (GSP).

"This is our territory, and we will continue to defend it. Our presence here is continuous and forms part of our efforts to show that this is our territory and that we will defend it," he said.

Located about 162 nautical miles northwest of Kota Kinabalu, Pulau Layang-Layang houses RMN Station Lima, a strategic outpost supporting maritime surveillance, intelligence gathering and operations in Malaysia's claimed area of the Spratly Islands.

Khaled also said that the station's surveillance capabilities would continue to be enhanced through a combination of existing maritime radar, unmanned aerial systems and future upgrades, including the planned installation of an air defence radar.

"We already have maritime radar to detect vessels, but we will be installing an air defence radar to further strengthen our monitoring and control of the area," he said.

During the visit, Khaled was briefed on the operational role of Station Lima and the facilities supporting daily operations by Naval Region 2 commander Rear Admiral Ivan Mario Andrew.

Also present were the navy chief Admiral Tan Sri Zulhelmy Ithnain, air force chief General Tan Sri Muhamad Norazlan Aris, Joint Forces Commander Lieutenant-General Tengku Muhammad Fauzi Tengku Ibrahim and ministry secretary-general Datuk Lokman Hakim Ali.

Khaled also met RMN personnel stationed on the island and observed operational activities carried out around Pulau Layang-Layang.

Commenting on the presence of foreign vessels in Malaysian waters, Khaled said Station Lima continued to serve as a critical forward surveillance and monitoring hub for Malaysia's maritime domain awareness efforts.

"We cannot deny that foreign vessels continue to enter and intrude into our waters. Station Lima plays a significant role in helping us detect and monitor such activities," he said.

He said protecting maritime interests was not the sole responsibility of the armed forces but required wider participation from various sectors under the Whole-of-Government and Whole-of-Society approach.

Khaled said the concept reflected the changing nature of defence challenges, which now extended beyond conventional military confrontations and required greater public awareness and participation.

"Today's defence challenges have changed. Previously, it was only about confrontations between parties at war, but now there are various forms of threats and attacks.

"The public must understand and play their role in helping the country, including by maintaining unity and avoiding divisions that could affect the effectiveness of the responsibilities carried out by our security forces," he said.

He said this included fishing communities operating in areas with overlapping claims, adding that their presence could contribute towards reinforcing Malaysia's position in the waters.

As part of the visit, Khaled also attended a coral restoration programme involving the National Security Council, Fisheries Department, RMN, Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency and Universiti Malaysia Sabah under a Civil-Military Cooperation (Cimic) initiative.

The programme aims to preserve marine ecosystems and ensure the sustainability of coral reefs, which are regarded as important assets for biodiversity and environmental balance in the waters surrounding Pulau Layang-Layang.