

## Borders well guarded during MCO, says army commander

LABUAN: Sabah's borders are well guarded and no intrusions by immigrants have been reported since the Movement Control Order (MCO) was implemented on March 18, according to a senior Malaysian army officer.

General Officer Commanding of the 5th Division Infantry, Major General Datuk Muhammad Hafizuddeain Jantan (pic), said the tight border security control was concentrated in the east coast, southern part and north Kalimantan borders of Sabah.

"We have deployed several battalions to tighten border control especially in light of the Covid-19 pandemic to prevent the spread of new clusters from illegal immigrants.

"We ensure the vast Sabah border is not intruded by illegal immigrants, whether through entry by river, land or illegal routes," he added.

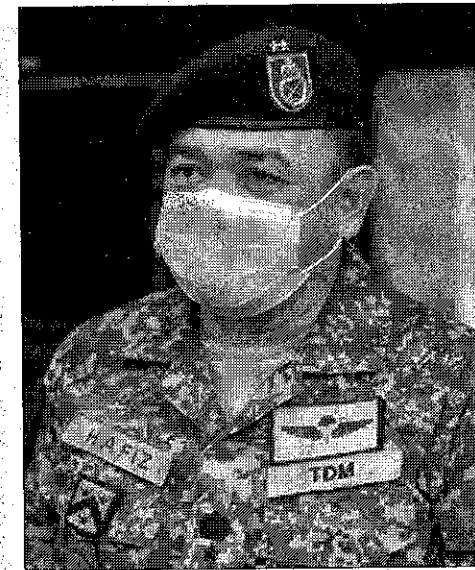
After the 'Op Penawar' was launched, there had been no attempts by illegal immigrants to enter Sabah, he told reporters after visiting a roadblock here before breaking fast with military personnel.

He said the number of soldiers assisting police in mounting roadblocks across Sabah and Labuan had dropped by 30 per cent from 740 daily since the implementation of the Conditional Movement Control Order (Emco). He also said the welfare of armed forces personnel had been well taken care of at all times.

Meanwhile, the Malaysia-Philippines' co-operation contributes in efforts to tackle cross-border crime threats such as the kidnap for ransom (KFR) by the Abu Sayyaf Group and its network from southern Philippines on the east coast waters of Sabah, Malaysia.

Eastern Sabah Security Command (ESSCom) Commander Datuk Hazani Ghazali said sharing of intelligence information with the Philippines enabled monitoring of KFR elements for interception at sea.

"From January to April, ESSZone security forces foiled two KFR attempts target-



Maj Gen Muhammad Hafizuddeain.

ing the fishing community," he said.

He said the KFR groups carried out their crimes during the day and at night in the two attempts.

"However, they were thwarted after we were tipped off by the Philippines on the early movements of the KFR groups from the southern Philippines, and we set our assets into motion to intercept them," he said.

Hazani said ESSCom also provided information to the Philippines' security forces on the abduction of five Indonesian fishermen in Tambisan waters, Tungku, Lahad Datu in January, believed to be by members of the Abu Sayyaf group.

Later, he said, Philippines' security forces actively pursued the victims and several series of clashes broke out with the Abu Sayyaf network from February to April, following which three members of the Jemaah Group were shot dead.

Security forces in Sabah endeavoured to curb cross-border criminal activities involving smuggling of goods, illegal immigrants and KFR, he added. - Bernama