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The role of the Fire and Rescue Department in Malaysia (FRDM) has evolved greatly over the decades. Of the 110,000 distress calls received by the department in 2018, only 35% were for firefighting related cases. The number of fire incidents saw a dip due to intense prevention and awareness campaigns, as well as advocacy carried out by the department. Even though the number of fire-related incidents had dropped, the department strived to learn and adopt new methods to fight fires.

Meanwhile, in the area of rescue services, the department handled as many as 71,500 cases last year which include other services such as technical rescue services, medical response services, hazardous material mitigation and other specialized services for a specific geographic area. In fact, as suggested in the National Security Council Directive, FRDM plays an indispensable role as one of the leading agencies in rescue efforts during disasters in Malaysia.

Cognisant that Malaysia is increasingly vulnerable to threats of natural and man-made disasters alike including haze, earthquakes, floods and tsunamis, the federal government set up a special agency in October 2015 called the National Disaster Management Agency (NADMA), dedicated to disaster relief and management (DRM) and/or other matters related to DRM. FRDM has since been a key component agency of NADMA and their contribution has been significant in most recently in the handling cases such as haze and forest fires and the chemical pollution incident in Pasir Gudang in 2019.

Given the growing demand for more technologically sound solutions to manage the increasingly challenging and complex situations, FRDM has embarked on serious efforts to modernise our operations and systems, employing high cutting-edge technology such as drones, GPS locator finder devices and satellite communications.

To learn the best rescue practices and skills, as well as new firefighting equipment and technology, our inaugural Malaysia International Rescue Extrication Challenge

(MIREC) in 2019 was an opportunity to learn from our global counterparts including Indonesia, Thailand, Macau, Singapore, Hong Kong and the Philippines. FRDM in turn showcased the team's skills and expertise.

Hence, FRDM is honoured and humbled at yet another opportunity to showcase our team's capabilities on a global platform such as NATSEC Asia (2020), alongside other key national agencies that jointly bear the mammoth responsibility of ensuring the country's national security. We have much to learn from our global counterparts. And we're looking forward to a productive and successful event ahead of us.

Thank you once again to the organisers of NATSEC Asia 2020 for putting together a comprehensive line-up of industry experts and exciting offerings.