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Najib-Inquiry

ERRANT MILITARY PERSONNEL IN GERIK ARMS HEIST INCIDENT TO FACE STERN ACTION

KUALA LUMPUR, July 11 (Bernama) -- Military personnel found to be negligent in the recent Gerik arms heist incident will face disciplinary action or imposed a heavier punishment by a court martial, Defence Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said today.

He said that it depended on the investigation conducted by a high-level board of inquiry whose panel members would be announced within the next couple of days.

The investigation would determine whether the incident occurred due to human negligence or shortcomings in the existing standard operating procedure.

"The investigation will be thorough and disciplinary action will be taken or a heavier punishment imposed by a court martial (on the errant military personnel)...it depends on the outcome of the investigation by the board of inquiry," he said after receiving Indonesian air force chief, Air Marshall Hanafie Asnan at Wisma Pertahanan, here.

He was earlier asked on whether the government has identified the factors which allowed the arms heist incident to occur, on July 2.

Najib said that a board of inquiry would be set up as the government would most likely table a white paper.

"This (the setting up of the board of inquiry) has to be done as the government will most likely table a white paper. Therefore, all inputs have to be presented by the Defence Ministry together with the Home Ministry," he said.

Yesterday, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said that the government would issue a white paper on the Gerik arms heist and Sauk hostage drama allegedly involving the Al Ma'unah martial arts group.

The white paper will contain a comprehensive report on the incident.

Asked whether there are still armed forces personnel who are members of the Al Ma'unah, Najib said that there were members of the group in the government departments, the police and armed forces.

He said that the ministry was awaiting the outcome of interviews of military personnel to ascertain whether those involved in the group were active or just followers or those who passed on inside information.

"All those identified as members of the Al-Ma'unah will be interviewed before they are asked to resign or whether they are allowed to continue serving...there has first to be a scrutiny in terms of security," he said.

On the possibility of a decline in morale among members of the Territorial Army following the arms heist at its 304 Camp, Najib said that their morale had to be further boosted and they had to preserve their image.

"I hope they will learn a lesson from the bitter experience to do whatever they can to ensure the tightest security possible especially in terms of mental alertness in carrying out sentry duty and in guarding the armoury. They need not only know the procedure but observe the procedure at all times," he said.

Earlier, Najib presented the gallantry award "Pingat Gagah Angkatan Tentera (Honorary)" exclusively awarded to army officials, to Hanafie.

-- BERNAMA

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