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Najib-Veterans

MINDEF TO SET UP VETERAN AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 25 (Bernama) -- The Ministry of Defence will set up the Malaysian Armed Forces (ATM) Veteran Affairs Department soon to tackle issues and problems pertaining to ex-servicemen more effectively.

Its minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said the establishment of the department had been agreed to by the Cabinet on Oct 11.

"To better serve their interest, the government feels that the proposed department should become a one-stop centre to coordinate and monitor the management of ex-servicemen and those going on retirement with assistance from the various bodies including Armed Forces Affairs Corporation (Perhebat), other government agencies as well as the private sector," he said at a media conference, here today.

He said that among other things, the department would ensure that ex-servicemen would have a better future, act as a regulating agency and be the link between government agencies, Perhebat and the private sector so that ex-servicemen could bring up issues and problems through the channel provided.

The department would also draw up programmes so that ex-servicemen would have a better second career and handle other welfare matters besides functioning as an information centre for armed forces veterans.

Najib said the department would be located in Kuala Lumpur and would have branches at the state level.

He said the Cabinet had also agreed to set up the ATM Veterans Advisory Council chaired by him to determine the department's policies.

The Council would also comprise deputy ministers and the relevant state Exco members, senior officers of the Ministry of Defence and representatives of government agencies and the private sector.

Asked whether there was any difference between the department and Perhebat, Najib said Perhebat concentrated on vocational training during the transition period before a soldier retired to equip him with the necessary skill and knowledge.

"On the other hand, the department's role is to coordinate and monitor the welfare of ex-servicemen after their retirement," he said.

Asked to comment on the admission by Parti Keadilan Nasional (Keadilan) Youth head Ezam Mohd Noor that he had been running down Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad abroad as published in the press today, Najib said such acts were not proper.

"This is something that is not proper and deriding the country's leaders abroad also tarnished Malaysia's good name," he said.

Najib, who is also Umno vice-president, said Ezam's and his friends' objectives in doing so was to gain sympathy abroad so that there would be international pressure on Malaysia.

Ezam was reported to have admitted that he had derided Dr Mahathir in the United States and Europe.

--BERNAMA

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