

Control order: Army to be deployed starting Sunday to assist cops

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UPDATED 4.09PM | Updating to include comments by Chief of Defence Gen Affendi Buang.

CORONAVIRUS | The army will be deployed to assist police in monitoring the situation amid a movement control order to curb the Covid-19 outbreak, said Defence Minister Ismail Sabri.

"Today's meeting decided that the army will help the police in monitoring the situation especially to ensure that the rakyat is following the instructions so that they will stay in their own houses.

"The army will be mobilised this Sunday and we are confident that with the army's help, stricter enforcement can be carried out," he told a press conference in Putrajaya today.

Ismail said the health minister has the prerogative to appoint any government agency to help in monitoring the order under the law.

"I would like to explain under Section 5 of the Prevention and Infectious Disease Control 1988, the health minister has the authority to appoint or provide power to any government agency needed to control or implement the order.

"The police received the authority letter from the health minister.

"I believed the defence ministry received a similar letter. So there's no need to question the instructions from the government," he said.

No emergency proclamation

Sabri advised the public against believing fake news on social media including a message that the Yang di-Pertuan Agong has agreed to the declaration of a state of emergency.

"I don't have that intention and it's not in the government's plan to declare an emergency.

"The rumour was that army assets will be deployed for an emergency. I hope

people don't believe fake news."

Sabri added that the other fake news in regard to the Army is that they would use pesticide to kill the Covid-19 virus during midnight.

Gov't to bring back M'sians in Italy, Iran

In another update, Ismail said 55 Malaysians in Iran and 94 in Italy would be returning home on March 22 and March 23 respectively.

"They will undergo 14 days quarantine because they are coming from high-risk countries," he said.

Noting the possibility of workers in the essential industry facing a problem en route to work during roadblocks, Ismail said the government will issue exemption travel passes to those workers.

"There's a possibility that government and private sector workers will have problems to prove to the authorities that they are going to work.

"So chief secretaries of each ministry will issue exemption travel letters to the workers, while a senior minister in charge of the economic cluster, (Mohamed)

Azmin (Ali), will get letters for private entities."

Ismail also urged those in other states to stay in their respective places and avoid coming to Kuala Lumpur during the school holidays.

"I urge parents whose children are having school holidays, to stay in the village, don't come to Kuala Lumpur.

"For those who had returned to their hometowns from Kuala Lumpur, just stay wherever you are," he said.

Army to help ease police's burden

Meanwhile, Chief of Defence Force Gen Affendi Buang confirmed army personnel will be deployed from its three wings come Sunday.

He said discussions have been held with the Inspector-General of Police Abdul Hamid Bador on how the Malaysian Armed Forces (MAF) could help police who have been shouldering a heavy burden since the movement control order was imposed on March 18.

"The three MAF wings (army, navy and air force) will be streamlined under a

working committee in accordance with suitability for deployment around the country,” he told Bernama.

Affendi added the military is moving in to also effectively ensure public compliance with the movement control order.

He spoke of the necessity for the military and the police to work together whenever the nation faces a crisis.

“It is also a duty of the military in peacetime. We are deployed not only during an emergency but also during natural disasters such as floods,” he said.

The two-week partial shutdown order is set to end on March 31.

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