

Newspaper	New Straits Times
Date	26/3/2013

Security area widened in east Sabah

NST-26/3/2013

RELOCATION: More police stations to be set up under the Esscom initiative

KUALA LUMPUR

TEN districts on the eastern seaboard of Sabah are now under the Eastern Sabah Safety Zone (Esszone) as the government cranks up efforts to protect these areas from foreign incursions.

This will be strengthened with the relocation of water villages along the state's east coast further inland to stop illegal immigrants from settling there.

Seven new police stations will also be set up in Esszone.

These measures were announced by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak at the 206th Police Day celebrations at the police training centre in Jalan Semarak here yesterday.

The 10 districts in Esszone are Kudat, Kota Marudu, Pitas, Beluran, Sandakan, Kinabatangan, La-

had Datu, Kunak, Semporna and Tawau.

The Esszone will come under the Eastern Sabah Security Command (Esscom), which will be chaired by the chief minister of Sabah, assisted by a chief executive officer (CEO) and other members who will be announced later.

"The CEO, who will be a civilian, will be in charge of supervising the activities of the security forces, as well as government agencies and departments involved," said Najib, adding that the committee's headquarters would be based in Lahad Datu.

Najib said he would personally monitor Esscom. He stressed that the formation of Esscom was not akin to declaring a state of emergency in Sabah.

"This initiative will also not get in the way of a clean, fair and democratic election process," he said, adding that this would also not give police extra powers.

"Those who feel their rights are violated through this initiative can take the government to court."

Najib said those staying in Esszone could lead normal lives. The only difference now was that there

10 districts under the Eastern Sabah Safety Zone (Esszone)

INFOGRAPHIC: NST



would be heightened security presence. On the relocation, Najib said it would be carried out to safeguard public security.

"Certain areas on the east coast are prone to foreign intrusions. With the relocation, these people will be put in a safe place for better monitoring by the authorities and for their own protection," he said, adding that the interests of people already living in areas identified for the relocation points would also be taken into account.

"Village heads and community leaders will be consulted to determine how they can earn a living and blend in with the locals."

Najib said to ensure the rule of law was upheld, those unhappy with illegal immigrants being placed near them could challenge the government's decision.

"The relocation will also not prevent people from carrying out their voting rights."

The prime minister also assured Malaysians that those involved in the relocation would not be neglected as there were also locals who were living in the illegal settlements.

The government will provide accommodation, ensure there are job opportunities, health and medical facilities, and also education for

the locals once they are relocated together with the illegals.

He said although the relocation was only for those in eastern Sabah, it did not mean that those in the west were forgotten.

"For now, the situation in the east needs immediate action. The relocation will be expanded to the whole of Sabah if necessary."

He said the government had never doubted the allegiance of the Suluk people (who have been staying in Sabah) as they had rights as provided for under the Federal Constitution.

"Their rights will be protected and their welfare looked after."

