

'AUSTERITY MOVE WON'T JEOPARDISE SECURITY'

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Optimising public spending will not affect nation's safety, assures PM

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THE government's austerity measures to slash operating expenditure by five per cent to optimise public spending will not jeopardise the country's security.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob said the savings target of at least five per cent from the remaining operating allocation for this year will not affect any plan on the security aspect of the nation.

Ismail Sabri, however, did not provide details, stating it would be revealed by Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Economy) Datuk Seri Mustapa Mohamed in a statement.

"It (the savings) is for development. The development project has yet to be implemented, but it is in the plan and the details will be announced by Tok Pa (Mustapa).

"The allocation will not affect the security of the country. The safety of the nation is a priority.

"Tok Pa (Mustapa) will explain it in detail. I will not speak on what will be revealed by him later," he said after launching the National Security Conference at Marriott Hotel here yesterday.

On July 14, a circular by the Finance Ministry stated that the government will restructure allocations to achieve a savings target of at least five per cent from the remaining operating allocation for this year to finance part of the additional expenditure relating to subsidies for people's welfare.

The ministry will finalise and issue a Restricted Warrant to inform on the amount of allocation that will be reduced.

It said the global economic uncertainty, international geopolitical tensions, as well as the steep increase in global commodities and food prices had caused high inflationary pressures.

Therefore, the government was taking measures to provide subsidies for essential goods and im-



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob talking to reporters after launching the National Security Conference in Putrajaya yesterday. BERNAMA PIC

pose price controls to reduce the inflationary impact.

The expenditure for subsidies and assistance was projected to reach RM77.7 billion, compared with the RM31 billion allocation approved in the 2022 Budget.

Hence, Treasury secretary-general Datuk Seri Asri Hamidon said ministries, departments, agencies, federal statutory bodies and companies limited by guarantee must restructure all programmes and activities, and manage their cash flow according to priority by ensuring that no trade-offs are made for programmes or activities focused on the people's wellbeing.

Meanwhile, on the country's sovereignty, the prime minister said Malaysia would not compromise on its rights and would continue to defend its assets abroad through legal means.

"There is no need (to mobilise security assets). It is not easy to deploy security assets into other countries, unless we are (working) with the United Nations.

"But we will continue to protect (the assets) through legal means. "What happened can be brought to court, and I guarantee that we will not compromise (on the matter) nor budge even an inch when it comes to defending the country's sovereignty and rights."

He said the special task force formed on July 15 to oversee and formulate appropriate legal action to address the claims by the purported heirs of the Sultan of Sulu against the Malaysian government would also look into protecting the country's other assets abroad.

"Measures are currently being

taken. As announced by the Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Parliament and Law) Datuk Seri Dr Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar, we will look into the matter comprehensively and not just at Petronas, but also other government assets abroad."

It was reported last week that two of Petronas's Luxembourg-registered subsidiaries were seized by descendants of the Sulu Sultanate after a French arbitration court ruled in March that Malaysia had to pay them.

Malaysia had since obtained a stay order from the French courts due to questions of sovereignty.

Earlier, when launching the conference, themed "National Security A Shared Responsibility", Ismail Sabri urged the National Security Council to implement a Comprehensive Security Practice within the next three years, following its Comprehensive Security doctrine, to enable the responsibility of maintaining national security to be shouldered proactively by the government machinery and all segments of society.

Ismail Sabri said the framework should be tried and tested before being streamlined and reminded all government agencies to be prepared through existing mechanisms.

"This Comprehensive Security Practice enables the level of preparedness to be enhanced for Malaysia to face potential crises in the future.

"It should also involve collaboration between ministries, government agencies and state governments, as well as the private sector."