

## **Government Assures Resettlement At ESSZONE Will Not Adversely Affect Sabah People**

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PUTRAJAYA, March 25 (Bernama) - The government gives its assurance that the resettlement programme in the Eastern Sabah Safety Zone (ESSZONE) will not adversely affect the rights of local residents, Attorney-General Tan Sri Abdul Gani Patail said.

To preserve public order, he said, the government would place individuals, including local residents, illegal immigrants or stateless persons, to a certain area.

He said the resettlement would not affect residents in the 10 districts of Kudat, Kota Marudu, Pitas, Beluran, Sandakan, Kinabatangan, Lahad Datu, Kunak, Semporna and Tawau.

It would only involve residents in hot areas and those categorised as dangerous and affected, he added.

He assured that the freedom and rights of the local residents would be preserved and that the government would assist Malaysians who would be affected by the resettlement.

"The locals will be compensated in accordance with the law, adequately and sufficiently. There is no issue," he told a media conference at his office here Monday.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak Monday announced the establishment of ESSZONE, covering the 10 districts to provide the legal basis for the Eastern Sabah Security Command (ESSCOM) effective today.

Abdul Gani said the resettlement would not prevent Malaysians from exercising his/her rights as a voter, either in the state or parliamentary elections.

The government, he said, would carry out necessary programmes to safeguard the interests of the people staying in the resettlement area and its vicinity.

"In carrying this resettlement, the government will get the advise and cooperation of the heads of the districts or villages. We will discuss to ensure the people feel safe and comfortable," he added.

Abdul Gani said a Board of Visitors, comprising government officers and representatives from relevant organisations, would be set up to conduct monthly checks on the resettlement areas and the people living there.

This is to ensure the resettlement areas will not be dangerous to the health and safety of residents there and to ensure the objective of the programme is achieved, he added.

Towards this end, he said, the government would ensure opportunities for basic education and employment for local residents.

The government would also provide training and the necessary equipment to enable them to begin a new life with a new job, he added.

He said the government would seek the cooperation, assistance and advise, as well as any form of contributions from any organisations or bodies in the country, for the purpose.

"International organizations will be invited to make sure all these are done properly and in compliance with domestic and international laws," he added.

Abdul Gani also said all the affected government agencies, like the Royal Malaysia Police, the Armed Forces, the Customs Department and the Immigration Department would cooperate and work together to preserve public security through sharing of information.

"This sharing of information is to preserve the country's sovereignty and increase national defence," he added.

He said the affected government agencies were required to evaluate periodically the information sharing system to strengthen the security of the shared information.

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