

Najib Announces Restructuring Of ESSCom

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PUTRAJAYA, July 8 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak today announced a restructuring of the Eastern Sabah Security Command (ESSCom) with the setting up of two major components - security and defence management as well as enforcement and public action.

He said the security and defence management component was aimed at pooling the resources of security agencies to enhance operational effectiveness.

This component would be led by an ESSCom commander who heads three special divisions, namely intelligence, security and defence as well as operations, he told a press conference at the Perdana Putra building here.

Najib also announced the appointment of ESSCom Security and Public Order Division director DCP Datuk Abd Rashid Harun as the ESSCom commander in charge of the intelligence, security and defence as well as operations division in the Eastern Sabah Security Zone (ESSZone) effective July 15.

"It is hoped that the restructuring of ESSCom and other measures taken and being taken will enhance the security in the Sabah east coast.

"The government hopes that the people, particularly those in the Sabah east coast, will always extend their full cooperation to strengthen security there.

"The support and cooperation of the people of Sabah will enable the security forces and others to maintain and strengthen security in the Sabah east coast," he said.

It was also aimed at enhancing and ensuring total engagement of the people at all levels with the security agencies in keeping the Sabah east coast free of intrusion and crime, he said.

He also said that it would lead to a common direction and concerted action by security personnel in ensuring safety and harmony in the Sabah east coast.

Najib said that besides restructuring ESSCom, three measures were also taken to enhance security in the Sabah east coast, one of which was enforcement of designated routes for boats entering Sabah waters.

"This measure will provide for more effective enforcement of security control and monitoring of boats in waters off the Sabah east coast.

"Boats which do not adhere to the rules will be detained and face action from the enforcement agencies based on the existing laws," he added.

Najib said the Bunga Mas 5 vessel would be used for sea basing or as a forward operations base as an interim measure pending the construction of a permanent sea basing structure.

It would take about six months for a permanent sea basing structure to be ready, he added.

He said the sea basing platform would also be equipped with a radar for wider coverage to detect the presence of boats in international waters.

In a move to further enhance security in the east coast of Sabah, 30 units of rigid hull fender boats (RHFB) were handed over to the Royal Malaysia Police, the Malaysian Armed Forces and the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency on May 29.

The government established ESSZone on March 24 last year to prevent a recurrence of the intrusion by armed Sulu terrorists in Kampung Tando, Lahad Datu, on Feb 12 and safeguard the country's sovereignty as well as maintain public order.

ESSCom serves as a security enforcement agent for ESSZone which comprises 10 districts in eastern Sabah, namely Kudat, Kota Marudu, Pitas, Beluran, Sandakan, Kinabatangan, Lahad Datu, Kunak, Semporna and Tawau.

Although ESSCom had been able to prevent fresh intrusions, abduction remains a security threat.

Abductions reported in the east coast of Sabah this year include one on June 15 where a cage-fish breeder, Chan Sai Chiun, 32, and a worker known only as Mazlan, in his 20s, were kidnapped by two armed men from a fish farm.

Another incident happened on May 6 when six armed men abducted the Chinese national manager of a fish-breeding company from Pulau Baik in Lahad Datu.

This happened a month after a female tourist from China was kidnapped, together with a resort employee, by a group of armed men at a resort in Semporna.

Replying to a question on the cases of abduction, Najib said the vast area and the free mobility of the people leaving and entering the area were among the factors that contributed to the kidnappings.

"Due to the existence of a complex community, the action to combat abduction was heavily dependent on information. We want cooperation from the local people.

For example, resort owners, by way of helping the security forces, should not employ non-citizens as their workers," he added.

Najib also said that other measures, such as installing of closed circuit television cameras and deployment of security personnel at suitable locations, were important to enhance security in Sabah waters.

Asked whether the post of the ESSCom commander would be rotated, Najib said it would depend on the situation.

"For now, we appoint the police to lead," he added.

Also present at the press conference were Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Dr Ali Hamsa, Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Khalid Abu Bakar and Chief of Defence Forces Gen Tan Sri Zulkifeli Mohd Zin.

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