

Malaysian, Philippine Authorities Should Discuss Kidnappings In ESSZone
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LAHAD DATU, May 23 (Bernama) - Malaysian and Philippine authorities should discuss the best approach to address cross-border crimes, especially kidnappings in the Eastern Sabah Security Zone (ESSZone).

Eastern Sabah Security Command (ESSCom) chief executive officer Ruji Ubi said the new initiative was necessary as criminals from southern Philippines infiltrated Sabah via ESSZone waters.

"Presently, cooperation between the Malaysian and the Philippine authorities is only focused on exchange of intelligence. The kidnapping at Ocean King Restaurant exposes the need for holistic cooperation including roundtable discussions and coordinated control of ESSZone waters and the Sulu Sea," he said when launching the ESSCom Commander's Cup futsal tournament here, today.

Ruji was confident that this comprehensive cooperation would result in a resolution for the benefit of both sides.

"This new mechanism must be explored or realised in our efforts to think out of the box. Both sides must be serious about this."

He hoped the Philippine authorities would consider the suggestion for their common good, thereby ensuring that ESSZone is free of kidnappings.

Four gunmen stormed Ocean King Restaurant in Sandakan at 7.45pm on May 21 and abducted a man and a woman in the presence of about 100 customers.

The victims were Thien Nyuk Fun, 50, the sister-in-law of the restaurant operator and Bernard Ghen Ted Fen, 39, an electrical consultant in Cambodia.

ESSZone covers 10 districts - Kudat, Kota Marudu, Pitas, Beluran, Sandakan, Kinabatangan, Lahad Datu, Kunak, Semporna and Tawau.

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