

Even I fear for my safety, Bung Moktar says after Sabah kidnappings
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By Anisah Shukry

Angry Sabahan lawmakers today demanded the government explain why another kidnapping had taken place in the state, despite millions of ringgit poured into the Eastern Sabah Security Command (Esscom).

A furious Datuk Bung Moktar Radin (BN-Kinabatangan) told the Dewan Rakyat today that he feared for his own safety and was unable to carry out his duties as a lawmaker by visiting his constituency.

"To me, Esscom has failed in carrying out its duties. It must be reviewed, otherwise the people will definitely lose their confidence. I don't want any more promises, I want the promises to be fulfilled," he said.

"Why didn't we stop the kidnappings, why weren't they prevented? Even I, as an MP, do not feel safe to carry out my duties. When I go down to my area, I must take the boat. I am fortunate I have not been kidnapped. I'm worried that if I was at the restaurant, I would have been kidnapped."

Bung said this when debating the emergency motion over the recent kidnappings off Sabah's east coast.

Last Thursday, four armed and masked men stormed into a popular seafood restaurant in Sandakan and kidnapped a female restaurant manager and a customer from Sarawak.

It was reported that a "large" but undisclosed sum had been demanded as ransom for the release of the two.

Datuk Marcus Mojigoh (BN-Putatan) said there was no clear coordination between the security forces in Sabah, adding that the public was unclear who actually was in charge of securing the state's porous borders.

"Where are all the assets that Esscom purchased? Even the Sabah chief minister is asking where it is," he added.

"We proposed that the surveillance be equipped with a drone, but they said they already have one. Now we are asking, have you even received the drone?"

Datuk Wilfred Madius Tangau (BN-Tuaran) said he was disappointed because the huge allocation set aside to secure Sabah's waters this year – RM660 million – was not reflected in the strategies suggested by the authorities.

Sandakan MP Seven Wong (DAP-Sandakan) said his constituents felt unsafe and could not understand how the kidnapping could have taken place, given all the

security forces near the area.

In his response to the lawmaker's concerns, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim admitted that some of the assets Putrajaya commissioned, such as the ships and boats, had yet to materialise as they were still being built.

"After the government approves the allocation, we can't get the assets immediately. The boats and ships must be built first," he said, adding that Putrajaya would consider buying ready-built boats in the future.

He also clarified that only RM69.9 million of the RM660 million allocation went to Esscom, with RM13 million used for management and another RM48.9 million for development.

The remainder was channelled to other security forces such as the police, the military and the navy, he said.

However, Shahidan said he could not explain why the kidnapping was able to take place last week, as the authorities were still preparing their reports.

There have been several cases of kidnapping for ransom in Sabah in the last few years.

In 2013, a Taiwanese woman was kidnapped while her husband was killed in Sipadan.

In April last year, a tourist from China and a Filipina hotel staff in Semporna were also abducted.

In June last year, a fish breeder and his Filipino worker were taken by kidnappers.

In July last year, armed men killed one policeman and kidnapped another on Mabul Island off Semporna.

To combat the kidnappings and intrusion of foreign gunmen, the government set up Esscom and supplied assets to boost safety and security. – May 20, 2015

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