

UMS, institute to study coastal security

KOTA KINABALU: Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) is to cooperate with the Institute of Public Security of Malaysia (IPSOM) to conduct a study on security issues in Sabah waters, including the Eastern Sabah Security Command (Esscom) area.

UMS Vice-Chancellor Professor Datuk Dr Mohd Harun Abdullah said UMS would sign a letter of intent (LOI) with the institute, a public security research agency under the Home Ministry.

He said the study, expected to take between three and six months, would prepare a proposal for the authorities under the Home Ministry to take the appropriate action in handling security situations in Sabah waters.

"The study will begin with a social survey to be conducted by both parties and distributed to all

the coastal areas involved, from Kudat to Tawau.

"We feel the time is right to conduct the survey as the Esscom is in place and there are current issues which need to be given serious attention," he told reporters before attending a meeting on the LOI at the UMS Chancellory building here yesterday.

Mohd Harun said the strategic cooperation would also contribute to details on the importance of security in the state's waters, and especially on the establishment of Esscom.

Esscom is the enforcement agent for the Eastern Sabah Security Zone (Esszone) which consists of 10 districts, namely Kudat, Kota Marudu, Pitas, Beluran, Kinabatangan, Sandakan, Lahad Datu, Kunak, Tawau and Semporna.

He said security aspects in the state needed to be emphasised due to its strategic location, bordering countries such as the Philippines, Indonesia and Brunei, besides the width of Sabah's coasts compared to the other states.

"Sabah is also exposed to various threats, including border issues with neighbouring countries, besides the smuggling of weapons, people and drugs," he said.

Mohd Harun said UMS was supportive of and committed to contributing towards development and defending national security, especially in Sabah.

"I believe that through academic expertise and manpower in various fields, including social science and anthropology, this study will contribute towards the security aspects of the state," he said.