

Sabah rejects enforcement of Territorial Sea Act 2021

KUALA LUMPUR: The Sabah government remains steadfast in rejecting any attempt to enforce the Territorial Sea Act 2021 to limit the boundaries of the state waters to three nautical miles from the coast.

Senator Datuk Bobbey Suan said Sabah never changed its borders except in 1984 when Labuan Island was handed over to the federal government and made a federal territory.

The Territorial Sea Act 2012 is a law passed by Parliament in 2012. It outlines the limits of the sovereign territory of a country and its states from the coastline. These include the sea, the ocean floor, and the deep soil, which is the layer of soil beneath the ocean floor.

"Although international law limits Malaysia's territorial waters to 12 nautical miles (22km) from the coast, this act limits state waters to three nautical miles (5.5km) from the coast, including for Sabah and Sarawak.

"Prior to 1963, Sabah and Sarawak, as independent states within Malaysia, had sovereignty over waters up to 12 nautical miles from their shores.

"This act is contrary to Article 1(3) of the Federal Constitution which states that the territory for each state is the area included in the state concerned since before Malaysia Day. The Sabah Legislative Assembly has never given its consent for the enforcement of Act 750 in Sabah.

"Changing Sabah's borders requires a majority vote in the state assembly," said Bobbey when debating the Yang di-Pertuan Agong's speech in the Dewan Negara yesterday.

Bobbey also stressed the Sabah government will continue to defend and fight for Sabah rights as enshrined in the 1963 Malaysia Agreement (MA63) and the Federal Constitution.

Sabah's border rights are enshrined under the North Borneo (Alternation of Boundaries) Order in Council 1954 which covers the continental shelf.

"Therefore, the rights and interests of the state related to this matter will be brought to the MA63 Special Council meeting, and hopefully this time it will be resolved thoroughly.

"Indeed, the prime minister's commitment to resolve issues related to Sabah's demands based on MA63, including basic infrastructure requirements, gas and electricity regulation, digitisation and security aspects during the recent presentation of the 12th Malaysia Plan (12MP) is greatly appreciated by the people of Sabah," he said.

Bobbey, who is Sabah Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia assistant information chief, also proposed the establishment of a new immigration, customs, quarantine and security complex in Nabawan district to curb illegal activities along the Malaysia-Kalimantan border.

"The Sabah government has identified Kampung Bantul in Nabawan as a suitable location to develop the new complex to control the land entrance between Sabah and Kalimantan," said Bobbey, who is also Nabawan assemblyman.

The proposal was in line with the fourth focus in the 12MP to strength security and public order to ensure national sovereignty, peace and stability in Malaysia, he said.

He also reminded the Finance Ministry to create a mechanism to monitor the distribution of the annual budget in order to eradicate poverty especially in Sabah, in line with the Shared Prosperity Vision 2030 and the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030.

The 2021 Economic Survey Report published by the Finance Ministry and the Sabah Socio-Economic Report 2019-2020 published by the Department of Statistics Malaysia stated that the problem of economic development imbalance between regions still existed as Malaysia was moving towards a high-income developed country, he said.

<https://www.nst.com.my/news/nation/2021/10/737957/sabah-rejects-enforcement-territorial-sea-act-2021>