

# Unacceptable if dur hostages are hurt, says Dr M

SUN 20.9.2000

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**KOTA KINABALU, Tues:** Malaysia will find it unacceptable if any Philippine action endangers the lives of the three Malaysians being held by Abu Sayyaf captors, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

Commenting on the massive Philippine military action against Abu Sayyaf positions in Jolo, the Prime Minister said: "Anything that endangers our people is not something we can accept."

However, he said Malaysia could not really interfere with Philippine President Joseph Estrada's decision to order the military action against Abu Sayyaf rebels who are holding 16 Filipinos, two French journalists and an American in addition to the Malaysians.

The fate of the hostages remains uncertain as the Philippine armed forces intensified their assault for the fourth day.

Asked if he had been in communication with Philippine authorities, Mahathir said: "Not me personally, but our people are. We know what they are doing and why they are doing this (assaulting the rebels militarily)."

"They have not been able to free the hostages but we do not want our hostages to be endangered in any way. We have conveyed this to the Philippine government," he said.

The Malaysians abducted from Pulau Pandanan are Pasir Resort manager Mohd Noh Sulaiman, divemaster Joe Joseph Ongkinoh and contractor Kan Wei Chung.

Asked if he was convinced the new security arrangement for Sabah in the wake of the Pandanan and Sipadan abductions would be effective, Mahathir said: "At the moment not yet, but we have plans on how to boost Sabah's security."

He said that Malaysia would consider anybody crossing its border as "invading our country and will take action befitting such a situation".

National Security and Public Order Department director Datuk Abdul Hamid Mustapha said they have increased police presence in all seven island resorts in Sabah effective today.

Deputy Defence Minister Datuk Mohd Shafie Apdal had said yesterday that the government had also deployed two fighter jets for surveillance to prevent trespassing by Abu Sayyaf gunmen into Sabah.