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PM: We're not working unilaterally

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today Malaysia is not **operating** unilaterally to resolve the hostage crisis **in Jolo**.

Sneaking after delivering a keynote address at the **Asia-Africa Forum III** here, Mahathir said Malaysia too has a right in the matter, as the hostages were seized from its territory.

"We are concerned about the people. They were taken hostage from Malaysian territory and some of them are Malaysians, so we have a right to be concerned," he said.

Whatever Malaysia is doing, he said, is with the consent of the Philippines.

"We are not there doing things unilaterally. But we have to be concerned for fate of the people who were kidnapped in our territory," Mahathir said.

The squabble on dealings with the **hostage** takers was sparked by **Foreign** Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar's admission that Malaysia has started direct negotiations with the **kidnappers**.

In an immediate-reaction, the Philippines chief negotiator Robert Aventajado accused Malaysia of interfering.