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Be patient, families of hostage urged

KOTA KINABALU, Thurs. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad told families of the three Malaysians still held captive by armed rebels in southern Philippines to be patient.

The Prime Minister said six other Malaysians and one German had been freed and from what he had heard, they had been treated well by their captors.

The three Malaysians who have yet to be released are Wildlife Department ranger Basilius Jim, cook Kua Yu Loong and divemaster Fong Yin Ken.

Dr Mahathir told this to newsmen tonight after spending some 20 minutes with families of Kua, Basilius and Fong, at the Magellan Sutera Hotel here.

"I hope the others still in captivity are treated well and their families do not worry too much because it seems that this group (the kidnapers) are not violent, unlike the ones in Sauk and the group involved in the arms heist."

The six freed are Wildlife Department rangers Francis Masangkim, Zulkarnain Hashim and Baln Krishnan Nair; policeman Abdul Jawah Salawat; cook Lee Hock Leong; and dive master Vincent Kong.

During the short meeting, Francis on behalf of his friends, presented Dr Mahathir a letter of appreciation to the Malaysian Government, for its efforts in securing their release.

The former hostages and their families also spoke with Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali; Chief Minister Datuk Osu Sukam and Osu's wife, Datin Noredah Majimpi.

(END)