

13 JUL 2000

Rulers-Commendation

GERIK ARMS HEISTS - RULERS COMMEND POLICE AND MILITARY

KUALA LUMPUR, July 13 (Bernama) -- The Conference of Malay Rulers, which ended its 186th meeting here today, commended and congratulated the armed forces and police for subduing the criminal gang behind the July 2 arms heists in Gerik.

The Rulers also commended and congratulated Army Field Commander Lt Gen Datuk Zaini Mohamed Said for his role in apprehending the leader of gang five days later.

"The efficient handling of the incident by military and police officers is highly praiseworthy and deeply appreciated," the Rulers said in a statement issued by the Keeper of the Rulers' Seal.

It said the Conference of Rulers expressed regret over the intrusion and robbery of arms from two military camps in Gerik on July 2.

"This act is highly deplorable as it could undermine national security," the statement said.

The Conference of Rulers also conveyed condolences to the families of two security forces personnel killed in the incident.

Special Branch detective Cpl R. Sagadevan of the Kuala Kangsar police station and Commando Pvt Mathew Anak Medan of the Terendak-based Special Forces Regiment, held hostage by the gang were later brutally executed.

By impersonating army officers and soldiers, 15 members of the Al-Ma'unah silat and mystical group, robbed two military camps in Gerik of a huge cache of arms, including assault rifles and machine-guns, in the pre-dawn heists on July 2.

They were later joined by 13 other gang members and holed out in Bukit Jenalek in Sauk near Kuala Kangsar taking four hostages with them.

The episode ended on July 6 when 27 members of the gang surrendered while another was killed during a shootout with security forces.

Today's Rulers Conference meeting was attended, among others by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah, and chaired by the Sultan of Kelantan.

The Sultan of Kedah was represented by the Raja Muda, the Sultan of Pahang and the Sultan of Johor by the respective Tengku Mahkota.

The two-day meeting discussed national policies, appointment and religious matters, among other matters, the statement said.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad also attended today's meeting.

All menteri besar and chief ministers were also in attendance except for Sarawak Chief Minister Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud.

He was represented by state Agriculture and Food Industry Minister Datuk Adenan Satem.

-- BERNAMA

ARA AHH RYN