

PM shocked by hostage's 'savage murder'

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Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak today expressed shock over the "savage" beheading of Malaysian hostage Bernard Then by Abu Sayyaf kidnappers.

"I, the government, and all Malaysians are shocked and sickened by the murder of our countryman Bernard Then and we condemn it in its strongest terms.

"We call upon authorities to take action against those who have perpetrated this savage and barbaric act and ensure that they are brought to justice," he said in a statement.

This comes as Malaysian police say it is still trying to ascertain the hostage's fate.

Then was beheaded after negotiations with the southern Philippines militant group by Philippines and Malaysian negotiators fell through, foreign media reported.

It was reported that the militant group killed Then after it failed to secure ransom.

Then was killed in the Abu Sayaff stronghold of Jolo, hours after Najib touched down in Manila for a two-day conference.

Another hostage, Thien Nyuk Fun, kidnapped along with Then from the Ocean King Seafood Restaurant in Sandakan on the Sabah east coast was freed on Nov 8 after almost six months.

Home Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi denied reports that Thien was freed after a 30 million pesos (RM7.85 million) ransom was paid.

The Dewan Rakyat today extended its sympathies to the deceased's family, but deputy speaker Ronald Kiandee rejects a request for a minute's silence.

Esscom must beef up security

Meanwhile, MCA is horrified at the savage execution by Abu Sayyaf militants who now plans to release video showing the gruesome decapitation.

Party deputy president Wee Ka Siong said action must be taken by the governments of Malaysia and the Philippines immediately, not only for justice but also to restore confidence in the security of our land and maritime.

"The Eastern Sabah Security Command (Esscom) must beef up security reconnaissance and surveillance in the waters between Sabah and Jolo, Basilan, Mindanao and other islands in southern Philippines.

"We mourn with Mrs Then and all other next-of-kin, but we also know that no amount of condolence messages will offer any solace or comfort to the grieving family," Wee said.

He said in view of the current Apec Summit in Manila and the upcoming 27th Asean Summit in Kuala Lumpur, these international conferences provide the appropriate and timely avenues for more security and intelligence exchange between the governments of Malaysia, the Philippines and all other Asean partners to check and annihilate the growth of Abu Sayyaf or any other splinter terrorist groups.

"Still fresh from the terrorist slaughter in Paris, the rapid pace of terrorism growth globally is troubling.

"However, trespassing onto Malaysia's sovereign soil by Jolo bandits or terrorists to kidnap tourists, visitors and Sabahans is not a new phenomenon, as the first major known large-scale abduction was back in 2000 on Sipadan Island when 21 hostages were grabbed," Wee said in a statement.

He said on the grounds of humanity and to uphold the teachings of Islam which is grounded on mercy, compassion and justice, they implore on Abu Sayyaf to immediately release all other hostages safely to their families without any conditions.

"The murder of Then must not go unpunished and the perpetrators must be brought forward to justice," Wee added.

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