

## **Philippines' decision will help curb kidnappings in Sabah, says Zahid**

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**Ahmad Fuad Yahya, Bernama**

Deputy Prime Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said authorisation granted to Malaysia by the Philippines government to enter its waters in pursuit of kidnappers will ease operations carried out by law enforcement agencies in the waters of Sabah.

Ahmad Zahid in welcoming the decision by the Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte said the move had paved the way for better cooperation between the law enforcement agencies of both Malaysia and the Philippines to help solve kidnap for ransom activities undertaken by terrorist groups who have fled to southern Philippines.

"The Malaysian government appreciate the approval given by President Duterte to the Malaysian authorities," he said when commenting on Duterte's decision at a meeting with Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak in Putrajaya today.

Najib, when announcing the matter said under the agreement the Malaysian authorities had been requested to contact the Philippines army when arriving in the territorial waters of that country to continue their pursuit, so that the Philippine authorities would be aware of their presence.

Najib said earlier Duterte had given the same authorisation to Indonesian President Jokowi and the defence ministers of the Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia would meet in Vientiane, Laos on Nov 22 to discuss a standard operating procedure (SOP) and legal aspects of the operational plan.

Ahmad Zahid, who is also home minister, is on a five-day working visit to the United Kingdom, beginning Monday.

He said the previous operations to curb kidnap-for-ransom involving Malaysians often remained at a stalemate as the kidnappers fled into the Philippine territorial waters.

Today, Ahmad Zahid visited the Airbus Defence and Space factory in the city, which is located 50km to the north of London.

The factory, among others, designs and produces satellites, telecommunication systems as well as science and navigation space programmes.

It has also developed a six-wheeled vehicle called ExoMars Rover which will be used for a Mars exploration mission.

The deputy prime minister's delegation is also joined by Malaysian High Commissioner to the United Kingdom, Ahmad Rasidi Hazizi.

- *Bernama*

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