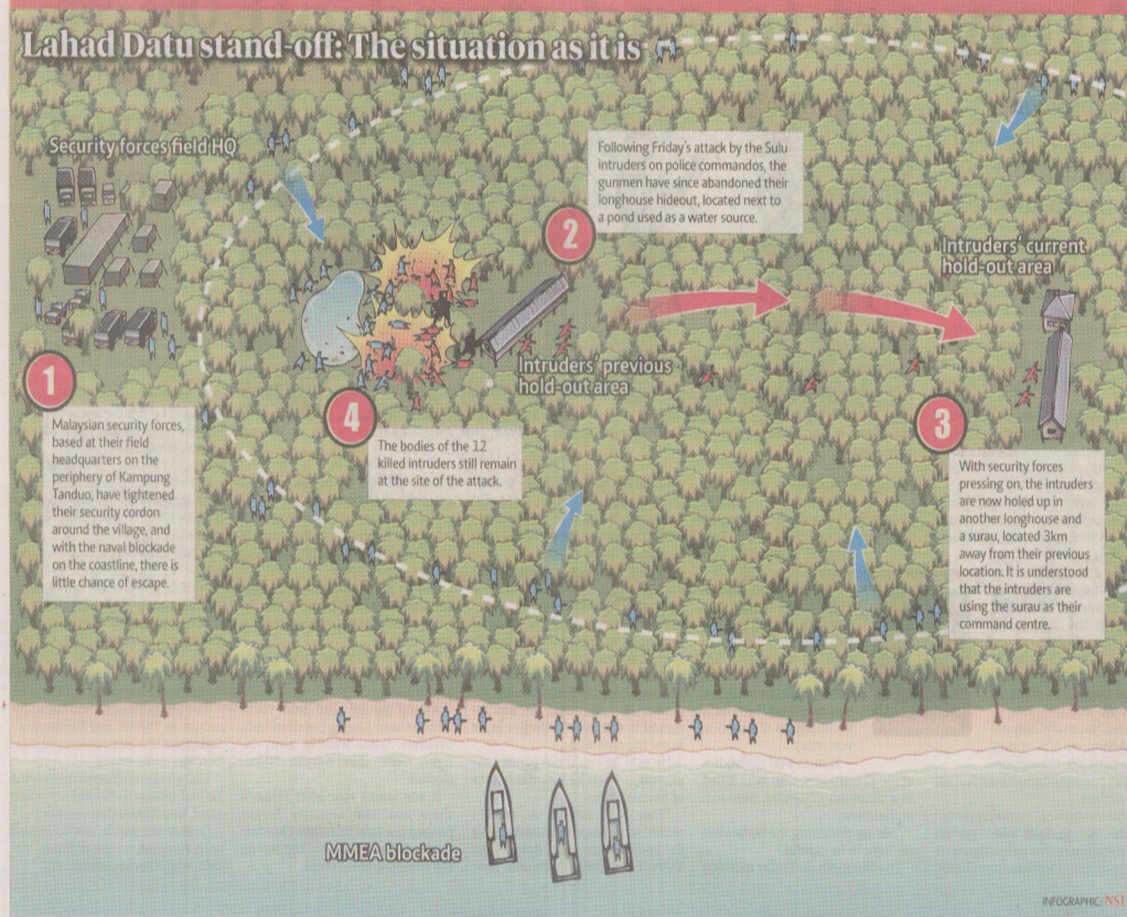


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NEWS

Lahad Datu stand-off: The situation as it is



# 'Tragedy could have been avoided'

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**DEADLY:** Government tried its best to ensure there was no bloodshed, says Anifah

**MEMBAKUT**

THE Lahad Datu stand-off, which took a bloody turn on Friday, was regrettable, something the government had tried to avoid at all cost, said Foreign Affairs Minister Datuk Seri Anifah Aman.

Commenting on a report yesterday that Jamalul Kiram III Ag-bimuddin Kiram, the self-proclaimed Sultan of Sulu, had agreed

to recall his army if the Malaysian and Philippines governments agreed the group would not be harmed, Anifah said that decision lay with the Home Ministry.

"We are saddened and regretful as this matter should have been settled earlier before any loss of lives.

"We had been working hard to ensure there was no bloodshed.

"We had even given them the guarantee they could return to their home country peacefully.

"Only now, after lives have been lost, they want our assurance that they can return home unharmed," said Anifah, who is also Kimanis member of parliament, after visiting the upgrading works of a bridge in



Kampung Limadang, near, here.

A local daily reported that Jamalul had spoken about recalling his soldiers to Malaysian emirs-saries, former Sabah deputy chief minister Datuk Amir Kahar Tun Mustapha and his wife, Datin Aminah Ambrose, when they met at an undisclosed location in Manila on Friday.

Jamalul wanted a ceasefire to allow the dead to be buried and for a long-term solution to be achieved, although it was not specified what was the long-term solution.

Anifah added that Wisma Putra was not directly involved in decision-making, where his role was mainly to deliver any demands made by the Philippine authorities

to parties here.

In Kota Kinabalu, police chief Assistant Commissioner Jauteh Dikun assured city residents that the Lahad Datu incident on Friday would not affect their safety here.

"The people should not panic as there is no link between what was happening in Lahad Datu with the presence of Filipino immigrants in the city," he said.

In Port Dickson, Defence Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi has faith in the police's ability to handle the intruders.

Zahid said the armed forces would support the police, which were the lead agency in dealing with this situation.

"We (armed forces) are not washing our hands off of the case.

"We are there along with our assets.

"We are giving our cooperation to

the police and have confidence in their ability to resolve the stand-off," said Zahid at the army's 80th year celebration parade at the Jalan Boulevard, Kem Sirusa, here yesterday.

Negri Sembilan Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Mohamad Hasan had officiated at the two-day celebration held here, also known as Army City.

Zahid assured people living in Beluran, Tawau, Semporna and Lahad Datu not to be worried as they were on full alert.

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