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PRIME NEWS

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Kg Tanduo secured, Ops Daulat may end soon

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DISENGAGEMENT TALKS: Jamalul's brother has meeting with Philippine govt

LAHAD DATU

THE conflict on the east coast of Sabah may be reaching the end sooner than expected.

After a series of heavy bombardments in the red zone in Felda Sahabat, security forces yesterday announced that they had secured Kampung Tanduo, the scene of fierce fighting over the past week.

This was where the terrorists from Sulu had holed up since they landed on Malaysian shores a month ago.

Security forces had nabbed 97 people suspected of having links with the terrorists. Most of these arrests were in Semporna, where there is a large squatter settlement of Suluks.

"The end is in sight," said Sabah police commissioner Datuk Hamza Taib yesterday.

His statement was given added credence when reports out of Manila stated that Bantilan Esmail Kiram II, the younger brother of



Soldiers in an armoured vehicle monitoring the beach in Kampung Tanduo, Lahad Datu, during the 'Ops Daulat' mopping-up exercise against terrorists from Sulu on Sunday. Picture courtesy of Defence Ministry

self-proclaimed Sulu Sultan Jamalul Kiram III, was in a closed-door meeting with Philippine Interior and Local Government Secretary Mar Roxas to discuss the "disengagement" of the so-called "royal Sulu army".

Roxas was quoted as saying that the meeting centred on the "disengagement" of the gunmen in Sabah to protect the innocent who were not involved in the conflict.

The Malaysian government had warned that there would be no ceasefire until the terrorists laid down their arms and surrendered unconditionally.

While negotiations are going on between the Sulu sultanate and the Philippine government, thousands of Suluks residing illegally in Sabah are making their way back to Sulu.

On Sunday, more than 1,000

Suluk boarded barter boats from Sandakan for southern Philippines.

Yesterday, another group of more than 300 followed suit.

Page 1 pic: Pupils of SK Sahabat 16 reciting a prayer for the safety of the country and security forces battling Sulu terrorists in Sabah when schools in Lahad Datu reopened yesterday.