

Newspaper	New Straits Times
Date	17/3/2013

MARCH 17, 2013

NEWS



Security forces conducting checks at the road linking Lahad Datu with Kunak as part of Ops Daulat yesterday. Pic by Effendy Rashid

Manila may get to see detainees

NST-17/3/2013

CONDITION: Meeting only after detention period

BAGAN DATOH

MALAYSIA will discuss the possibility of allowing representatives of the Philippine government to meet with the Filipinos who were arrested for alleged collaboration with the Sulu terrorists in Lahad Datu.

To date, 104 people have been detained for investigations under the Security Offences (Special Measures) Act 2012 (Sosma). Most of them are allegedly Filipinos.

Defence Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said Philippine Defence Secretary Voltaire T. Gazmin had made the request during a meeting in Putrajaya recently.

Zahid said he would discuss the matter with Foreign Affairs Minister Datuk Seri Anifah Aman and Wisma Putra officials.

"We will also discuss with the police if representatives from the Philippine embassy and the Philippine consular teams in Sabah could visit the detainees once investigations are over," he said after presenting computers to representatives of 44 Tamil schools from the state at the Bagan Datoh Umno building here, yesterday.

However, Zahid said such a meeting could

only take place after the 28-day detention period allowed under Sosma.

"With this understanding, it is hoped that the people will realise that Malaysia and the Philippines have very close diplomatic ties and are working together to end the conflict in Sabah."

Zahid, who is also Bagan Datoh member of parliament, also said the cabinet had agreed on Wednesday to allow foreign news agencies, particularly from the Philippines, to cover the on-going operation by security forces against the remaining Sulu terrorists in Felda Sahabat, Lahad Datu, adding that the foreign media were now at the media centre there to get the latest developments on Ops Daulat.

"If necessary, the police will take the foreign journalists into the operations areas for them to get a better picture of the situation on the ground.

Zahid advised residents near the operation areas to be vigilant as the remaining terrorists were "starving and desperate".

He said the terrorist group's morale was low, particularly after their leader, Agbimuddin Kiram, abandoned them and fled to the Philippines.

"The terrorists are now forced to steal food for their survival."

