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Newspaper	New Straits Times
Date	17/3/2013

'Group leader will face charges in Malaysia'

NST - 17/3/2013



Agbimuddin Kiram, brother of Jamalul Kiram III, is believed to have fled Sabah to the Philippines

LAHAD DATU: Investigations under the Security Offences (Special Measures) Act have been initiated against Agbimuddin Kiram, leader of the terrorist group, here, who is believed to have fled to the Philippines.

State police Commissioner Datuk Hamza Taib said even if Agbimuddin is in the Philippines, Malaysia would seek his extradition through the Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters Act.

"We have put up an investigation paper and we will deal with it according to our laws. We will apply for him to be extradited and he will face charges in Malaysian courts."

Hamza stressed that the Philip-

pine government had been working with Malaysia to bring to book those responsible for the conflict here, which had claimed 72 lives so far.

Agbimuddin, the younger brother of Jamalul Kiram III, led a group of more than 200 gunmen from Sulu to stake a claim on Sabah.

He was believed to have slipped through a security cordon in Felda Sahabat and sought refuge among sympathisers in Semporna before fleeing to the southern Philippines recently, leaving his men here to fight his battle.



The military patrolling Sungai Nyamuk near Kampung Tanduo on Friday. Pic courtesy of Ministry of Defence

News of Agbimuddin's escape was announced by Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Ismail Omar in Kota Kinabalu on Friday.

However, news out of Manila yesterday suggested that Agbimuddin was still in Sabah.

ABS-CBNnews.com, quoting a spokesman for Jamalul, denied that Agbimuddin had fled Sabah.

The spokesman, Abraham Idjirani, said the claim was merely "propaganda" against the sultan's followers.

"That is a propaganda of Malaysia so as not to disturb their elections. It is a counter-strategy," he said, adding that if Agbimuddin had indeed returned to the country, he would have been arrested by the

Philippine authorities. Idjirani also claimed he spoke with Agbimuddin about 2pm on Friday.

"He told me he was still in Sabah with the group."

Page 1 caption: A policeman standing guard as children frolic at a playground in Felda Sahabat, Lahad Datu.