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PAGE 8 | NEW STRAITS TIMES

PRIME NEWS

Philippines expresses wish to claim bodies

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FIRST STEP: Embassy officials meet with Lahad Datu police chief

LAHAD DATU

PHILIPPINE authorities met with police here on Saturday, expressing their intention to claim the bodies of Sulu terrorists killed by Malaysian security forces.

A delegation from the Philippine embassy met with Lahad Datu police chief Superintendent Shamsudin Mat at his office yesterday, initiating the first step towards claiming the bodies.

"The meeting with the Philippine officials was just a preliminary step as they will be liaising with Wisma

Putra in order to facilitate the process," Shamsudin told the *New Straits Times*.

At present, there are 28 bodies of terrorists which had been sent to hospitals here and Tawau.

There are still a number of bodies which have yet to be extricated from shallow graves.

These bodies were buried by their compatriots in Kampung Tanduo and other areas.

According to the authorities, post-mortem examinations had

been carried out on most of the bodies.

Sixty-two terrorists had been killed by Malaysian security forces since fighting erupted more than a fortnight ago.

The latest casualty incurred yesterday when the security forces engaged the terrorists in a firefight in Tanjung Batu.

A terrorist was killed during a sweeping and mopping-up operations in the area.



Official correspondences had been sent to the Philippine embassy to ascertain whether it wished to claim the bodies, failing which, they will be buried here.

Since the bodies were taken to hospitals here and in Tawau, soldiers had been stationed at the mortuaries of the hospitals.

Entry is restricted except to coroners and key personnel.

Sabah police chief Datuk Hamza Taib said the stationing of soldiers at the mortuaries was a security measure under the Blue Ocean Strategy.