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We didn't start it: Dr M

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> Malaysia retaliated only after our security forces were killed, says former premier

BY RADZI RAZAK
newsdesk@thesundaily.com

LAHAD DATU: Malaysia did not take the offensive in dealing with the Philippine terrorists but retaliated and attacked only after security forces were killed.

Former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said people from the Philippines such as the Bajau and Suluk had made Sabah their home for years and were treated well by the government and even granted citizenship.

"We have people from the same descendants who are loyal to the country.

"They support the Malaysian security forces and do not support what the terrorists did," he told the media after visiting a temporary army camp in Felda Sahabat yesterday.

Mahathir spent about an hour at the camp and was warmly greeted by the soldiers. He also said he wanted to thank the soldiers and policemen who had made sacrifices for the safety and sovereignty of the people in the country.

"I am indebted to them and I think many people want to thank them for saving their lives as well.

"I found them (the soldiers) happy, spirited and I am convinced they can do the job," he said.

Mahathir suggested that the security forces could do with more suitable equipment for operating in treacherous



Mahathir meets army and police personnel during his visit to the camp at Felda Sahabat yesterday.

SYED AZAHAR SYED OSMAN / THE SUN

terrain. "I think they need more suitable equipment in view of the swampy area and shallow water. It's difficult for the army boats to operate under such conditions."

He was confident the government will deal with this problem urgently.

Earlier, in Papar, Mahathir said the



government had never issued any directive to any quarter to issue identity cards or citizenship to unqualified immigrants in Sabah. He said Sabahans could not blame the

government during his administration for fraud committed by certain parties for self-interest.