

Newspaper	THE STAR
Date	11 NOVEMBER 2016

No more border escapes

The Star 11/11/2016

Duterte gives Malaysia licence to enter waters to pursue pirates



Meeting of two leaders: Najib talking to Duterte during the Philippines President's visit to the Perdana Putra building in Putrajaya.
— Bernama

By MAZWIN NIK ANIS
and JOSEPH KAOS JR
newsdesk@thestar.com.my

PUTRAJAYA: The days of pirates escaping Malaysian authorities by fleeing across the border into Tawi-Tawi waters are over.

Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte, in his inaugural visit to Malaysia, has given Malaysia the licence to enter his country's waters in pursuit of not only kidnapers, but also militants who have been terrorising Sabah's east coast.

Calling this a new development in Putrajaya-Manila ties, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said the two leaders agreed on the need to stamp out the security risk which also affects Indonesia.

There were several kidnap-for-ransom cases this year alone, which saw 10 Malaysians whisked away by militant groups based in southern Philippines. Five are still being held captive.

"I appreciate Duterte's understanding because this is a practical way for us to help each other. It's a new development which has been agreed by (Indonesian President) Jokowi with Duterte, and now with me.

"We need to stamp out this crime

We need to stamp out this crime as this is affecting the welfare and security of not only Sabahans but tourists who visit the state.

Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak

as this is affecting the welfare and security of not only Sabahans but tourists who visit the state," Najib said after a bilateral meeting with Duterte yesterday.

The Philippine President was here for a two-day visit, his first after assuming the presidency in June.

Defence ministers from Malaysia, the Philippines and Indonesia will be meeting in Vientiane on Nov 22 to discuss the standard operating procedure and the various legal aspect of this new development.

While authorities from Malaysia and Indonesia are allowed to enter

its maritime borders, they have to inform the Philippine navy of their presence in the area.

"If you are in hot pursuit of the bad guys and we reach maritime boundaries, the bad guys will get away if you stop. So, President Duterte said we should continue the chase and he has given us the licence to do so. We are to inform the Philippine navy and they will assist us if they are nearby," said Najib.

The Prime Minister said new orders would be issued to the security forces based along the Sabah east coast and that this latest development was a clear sign of the two countries' commitment to eliminate kidnapping incidents.

"This new development will also help move relations between both countries forward.

"While we have been enjoying warm and cordial relations, we have yet to reach our full potential due to security and legal issues," he added.

On Philippines' claims over Sabah, Najib said that this was not an issue to be addressed immediately.

Philippines has a long standing claim to Sabah, which was once under the rule of the Sulu Sultanate.

The claim has caused snags in several matters such as the setting up of a BIMP-EAGA (Brunei Darussalam-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines East Asean Growth Area) regional office and a consular office in Kota Kinabalu.

Duterte expressed appreciation on Malaysia's role in the peace process in southern Philippines, said Najib, adding that the Government has agreed to continue placing an international monitoring team there.

"With negotiations completed, there is no need for a facilitator to be placed there, but Duterte has asked for the monitoring team to remain," he said.

Malaysia has been playing the role of facilitator in the Bangsamoro peace process negotiations and is leading the international monitoring team in the southern Philippines.

On the issue of illegal immigrants in Sabah, Najib said both countries agreed to send home in stages the 7,000 Philippine nationals currently in the state.

Watch the video
thestartv.com 