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ABU SAYYAF KIDNAPPING

# RELIEF ALL ROUND FOR RESCUED HOSTAGES

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They will receive the best treatment possible after ordeal, says Najib

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**A** MAJOR breakthrough was marked with the release of five Malaysian hostages held captive by Abu Sayyaf terrorists in southern Philippines.

Eight months after they were taken in waters off Lahad Datu, two are back in the country and have been reunited with their families while three others are recuperating at a military hospital in Jolo.

The five crew members of a tugboat — Tayudin Anjut, 45, Abdul Rahim Summas, 62, Fandy Bakran, 27, Mohd Jumadil Rahim, 24, and Mohd Ridzuan Ismail, 33 — were abducted in Dent Haven waters off Lahad Datu on July 18 last year.

The breakthrough began with the rescue of Tayudin and Rahim by Philippine security forces at a mangrove in Barangay Karudong in Kalinggalang Caluang, Sulu, on Thursday. After they were freed, Fandy, Jumadil and Ridzuan were also rescued by the Philippine authorities yesterday morning.

Tayudin and Abdul Rahim were reunited with their families yesterday morning at Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak's residence at Taman Duta.

In thanking the police, Wisma Putra, Kelab Putera Malaysia and the Philippine authorities on the joint effort to rescue the hostages, Najib said no ransom had been paid.

Najib said when he met them, the two men spoke of their eight-month ordeal and how it had greatly distressed their spouses and family members.

"The stress on their wives and families was immense throughout their detention," he said.

On the aid to be rendered to the duo, Najib said both men would be placed in the first-class ward of Selayang Hospital as they undergo medical treatment.

He said Tayudin's eyesight had

been impaired and that he required surgery, while Rahim was unable to walk properly.

"We will give them the best treatment possible," Najib said.

Holding back tears, Tayudin said returning to Malaysia was a big relief for him and Rahim.

"We want to thank the government for helping us to return to our homeland. We are crew members, we are poor. It would have been impossible for the kidnapers to release us without help.

"We are glad that we no longer have to go through the anguish we faced for the past eight months," Tayudin said.

In **Tawau**, Ridzuan's wife, Hariyanti Hamsi, 31, was in tears when she discovered that her husband had also been freed.

"I hope our reunion will be arranged as soon as possible," she said at her home in Kampung Otentik, Tanjung Batu Keramat, yesterday. **Additional reporting by Teoh Pei Ying**