

Dr Mahathir Supports RCI To Find Mastermind Behind Lahad Datu Intrusion
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KUALA LUMPUR, March 15 (Bernama) -- Former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad believes there is a need for the formation of a Royal Commission of Inquiry (RCI) to determine who was the mastermind behind the intrusion by armed terrorists in Sabah.

"We have an open government. We can investigate who's the culprit behind the incident. Everything can be set up," he said.

Dr Mahathir said this to the media after presenting a cheque for RM80,000 contributed by Perdana Global Peace Foundation (PGPF) to the Royal Malaysia Police (PDRM) Welfare Fund which was represented by the Deputy Inspector-General of Police, Tan Sri Khalid Abu Bakar, here Friday.

Yesterday, Home Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein was reported to have proposed the need for a white paper or RCI to be created to find the mastermind for the intrusion in Sabah.

Hishammuddin was also reported to have said that a comprehensive probe was needed to determine the actual motive for the intrusion, including the possibility that someone was funding the militants from the southern Philippines to threaten national peace and sovereignty.

A Reuters news agency article had quoted a Philippine military officer as saying the intruders had come on the invitation of a Malaysian opposition politician to discuss land issues.

The Manila Times had reportedly claimed that the incursion was related to the Malaysian opposition's campaign to give Sabah autonomy if they win.

Dr Mahathir also questioned the sources of funds obtained by the intruders who claimed that they represented the 'Sulu Sultanate' whereas the Philippine government had stated that they were not a wealthy group.

"Personally, I want to know where they get such (a large) amount of money (to buy weapons and come to Sabah). The rakyat too wants to know.

"I don't think he (Jamalul Kiram) is such a rich man. All operations involve a lot of money.

"If you are completely bankrupt, how can you have that money," he said.

Earlier in his speech, Dr Mahathir, who is also PGPF president, said the claim by the intruders that Sabah purportedly belonged to them was unfounded because Malaysia was an independent country which had been recognised by the United Nations (UN) and its people had the right to defend the country when threatened by the enemy.

"We are defending our country, we have the legitimate right to defend. In this case we can see people having lost their lives in defending the country.

"Before, we had insurgents, we faced many situations including overthrowing the government, but now this is a different situation," he said.

He said the government recognised the existence of the Sulu people in Sabah who had become Malaysian citizens and they certainly reject the idea of the insurgents taking over Sabah.

Meanwhile, several non-governmental organisations (NGOs) urged the government to set up the RCI to investigate the intrusion by armed terrorists in Lahad Datu since Feb 12.

Among the NGOs were the Pertubuhan Pribumi Perkasa Malaysia (Perkasa), Jalur Tiga (Jati) and Pertubuhan Jaringan Melayu Malaysia (JMM) which staged a peaceful rally for an hour after the Friday prayer at the National Mosque, here.

In another development, 112 NGOs handed over a memorandum to the representative of the Philippine Embassy here to be delivered to Jamalul Kiram who is alleged to be the mastermind of the armed group in Lahad Datu.

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