

**PKR: Opposition no links to Sulu intrusion, claims a diversion from Sabah security threat**

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**By Md Farhan Darwis and Ida Lim**

KUALA LUMPUR, March 3 — PKR's Azmin Ali has challenged claims Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim or the opposition bloc have ever backed the Filipino Muslim militants that have penetrated Sabah, saying the allegations are baseless and a diversion from Putrajaya's handling of the security threat.

"All these are baseless accusations and attempts to divert attention from the real issue," the PKR deputy president told The Malaysian Insider last night.

Azmin said the real issue was the people's safety, adding that Malaysians wanted to know the prime minister's and home minister's explanation on their handling of the standoff near Lahad Datu, Sabah which has dragged on for close to three weeks now.

He said people should not die in vain, in reference to the Friday morning gunfight which left 12 Sulu rebels, two Malaysian police commandos and a local dead.

"We ask, don't shift the people's attention, how the safety of our seas and territory can be breached," Azmin said, appearing to join those who had called for tighter border security, including former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Azmin claimed the allegations were made in an attempt to "weaken" Sabahans' support for federal opposition Pakatan Rakyat (PR).

Azmin himself then accused Umno of being behind all these allegations, while also saying that strong evidence needs to be shown when allegations are made.

Although it was pointed out that the allegations had first surfaced in a foreign news portal and international newswire Reuters, Azmin persisted in attributing them to political rival Umno.

"Whoever that makes accusations on Anwar needs to produce proof, I am not surprised if there are external quarters used to burukkan (tarnish) Anwar," he said, saying that Umno had previously used those in the US to place the PKR de-facto leader in a bad light.

The Philippine Daily Inquirer report titled "Philippine govt intel eyes 3 groups abetting Sulu sultan's claim" was also quoted in local Malay-language daily Utusan Malaysia yesterday.

The Philippine news report on Friday cited unnamed intelligence sources there when reporting that the Malaysian opposition here was allegedly one of three groups that could have backed the Sulu rebels' claim on Sabah.

It said that a Philippine intelligence officer pointed to an unnamed individual from the opposition allied to Anwar, adding that the figure was looking to contest a Sabah seat in Election 2013.

"Apparently, this politician was one of those who spoke with the Kirams. He supposedly

gave the opposition's support to the Kirams' claim to Sabah," the source who declined to be named said, in reference to the family of self-styled sultan Jamalul Kiram III.

Utusan also cited a February 14 report from newswire Reuters, where a Philippine military officer reportedly said a Malaysian opposition politician had invited the Sulu men to discuss land matters.

The Manila Times was also quoted by Utusan, where it was reportedly claimed that the incursion was related to the Malaysian opposition's campaign to give Sabah autonomy if they win.

Sabah's colourful opposition front now includes the Sabah Progressive Party (SAPP), State Reform Party (STAR), three PR parties — PKR, DAP, PAS, and two new PR-aligned movements APS (Angkatan Perubahan Sabah) and PPS (Pakatan Perubahan Sabah).

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