

Malaysia Awaits Official Info From Philippines On Reported Hostage Killing
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KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 18 (Bernama) -- Malaysia is awaiting official information from the Philippines on the validity of reports that a Malaysian hostage has been beheaded by a Philippine militant group, said Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi.

Ahmad Zahid, who is also Home Minister, said the police would get detailed information from the Philippine authorities on the report which was based on Philippine military intelligence.

"We need to officially verify it first," he told reporters after opening the ASEAN+ Young Leaders Summit 2015 at the Putra World Trade Centre here today.

International media reports said businessman Bernard Then, 39, was beheaded after having been kidnapped by gunmen from a seafood restaurant in Sandakan in May.

The businessman was reportedly beheaded in a secluded location, believed to be a stronghold of Abu Sayyaf militants in the southern Philippines.

Earlier today, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak had condemned the killing and called on authorities to take action against those who had perpetrated what he described as a savage and barbaric act.

On another matter, Ahmad Zahid said the home ministry welcomed the proposal to do away with the mandatory death sentence under the Dangerous Drugs Act 1952.

He said Malaysia would follow in the footsteps of most countries which had already removed the mandatory death sentence for drug traffickers, but what was more important were the prevention and rehabilitation measures.

"I will monitor the efforts being taken in terms of the drafting and modification for alignment with the enforcement measures," he said.

It was reported that the government had planned to submit a bill to drop the mandatory death sentence imposed on some serious crimes, especially for drug related and firearms possession offences.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Nancy Shukri said the bill was expected to be tabled in the Dewan Rakyat in March next year.

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