

# 'Sympathisers' detained

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## Dozens 'linked' to Sulu gunmen held for questioning



**Thorough checks:** Policemen combing the area during their operation at Kampung Bubul Lama.

**LAHAD DATU:** Dozens of suspected sympathisers of the so called Sulu gunmen have been detained for questioning by police over the past fortnight.

They included relatives of the Sulu armed group's leader Raja Muda Azizmudie Kiram, a few uniformed personnel and a local politician here.

Police are believed to be particularly interested in questioning a very close relative of Azzimudie who had played an advisory role to the Sulu group, and has gone into hiding either here or in Semporna.

However, no official confirmation was available on the number of arrests so far and their identities as police try to establish the links of the Sulu armed group to local families and sympathisers.

On Tuesday night, villagers near Kembarabudi in the Felda Sahabat area said police also detained eight people as they were driving out of the Tanjung Labian area, about 5km away along the coastline from Tanduo village which was bombed earlier in the day.

The villagers claimed that those detained could include a son of Azzimudie and a woman related to him.

Azzimudie, the brother of self-proclaimed Sultan of Sulu Jamalul Kiram III, had told *The*

*Star* over the telephone that one of his sons was with him in Tanduo along with 200 to 300 of his followers, including six women.

Tanduo residents, who fled when the Sulu group first landed on Feb 9, have said that Azzimudie and his top army man known as Musa, a former Moro National Liberation Front member, were related to local village leaders through marriage.

Azzimudie was an assistant district officer of Kudat in the early 1970s and his family had many relatives living in Lahad Datu, Semporna and Sandakan.

Police have been questioning many of his relatives as part of intelligence gathering with rumours of local groups planning attacks or stealing weapons from security installations.

## Police arrest four men during sweep in Semporna

**SEMPORNA:** Four men were detained here for dubious documentation and drugs during a sweep in Kampung Bubul Lama at noon.

Three of them – one a Philippine Sulu man with an IMM13 documentation (an immigration issued pass to southern Philippine refugees who fled to Sabah during the 1970s civil war) – were detained as there was some doubts about the papers they had on them.

The fourth man was found to have drugs on him.

"We will take them to the police station to verify the documents and let them go if everything is in order. As for the man with the drugs, we will hand him over to the narcotics department," said a senior police officer who lead the team during the operation.

On Tuesday night, someone reported seeing unusual movement around Kampong Bubul Lama, which is next to the Sri Wangsa camp tactical military base here.

"Someone said there were figures moving in and out of the area in the evening and night. We don't know who they are.

"This is a highly protected target, so we have to go in, check and clear them.

"If there are intruders there, they will definitely shoot at us. But if it is only the villagers there, it will be fine," said the senior police officer.

He allowed the media to follow them to have an idea of what the police operation of Ops Daulat is like, provided they stayed behind until his men had combed the area first and deemed it safe to enter.

There were no shots fired and no weapons found as the police carried out door-to-door checks and searched vehicles in the village.

**Mass grave:**  
A picture of the  
dead bodies  
recovered from a  
mass grave dug  
by the intruders.



## Ministers show pix of slain intruders

**LAHAD DATU:** Photographs of nine slain intruders killed by Malaysian security forces during a shootout with Sulu gunmen were shown to the media by Defence Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi and Home Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Tun Hussein.

The seven photographs showed bodies of several men lying next to each other in a makeshift mass grave in Kampung Tanduo after security forces launched an attack on Tuesday. Other photographs also showed a cache of weapons seized from them.

The bodies, which were believed to have been buried by other intruders, were found during a mopping-up operation on the gunmen who have been holed up in the village since Feb 9.

"These (the photographs) are proof that what we have been saying is not made up (by certain quarters). We are in the process of collecting more bodies," Dr Ahmad Zahid told a press conference at Felda Sahabat Residence yesterday.

Hishammuddin said that no Malaysian personnel were injured in the operation.

However, he said a police forensics officer sent to gather evidence after the operation

**We are in the process of collecting more bodies.**

— DATUK SERI DR AHMAD ZAHID HAMIDI

was shot at by gunmen at about 1.45pm yesterday. He was unharmed.

"We must be careful and make sure that the areas are really safe before going in. That is why we take a bit of time to gather information and evidence," he added.

Hishammuddin said the authorities would keep the public updated on the operations and release more photographs deemed non-sensitive as evidence.

Meanwhile, a special branch officer who was injured during a shootout in Semporna on Saturday arrived in Kuala Lumpur to receive medical treatment.

Police sources said Insp Mohd Hasnal Jamil, 31, who survived the Saturday shootout against the Sulu armed invaders, arrived at the KL International Airport here at 6.25pm on a commercial flight.