

Sabah issue



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The armed intrusion into Sabah by Sulu terrorists is a blow to the progress of the BIMP-EAGA (Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines-East Asean Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA), says BIMP-EAGA Malaysia Business Council chairman Datuk Roselan Johar Mohamed. Expressing profound dismay over the incident, he called on BIMP-EAGA member countries to go back to the original status quo, focusing more on accelerating economic development in the four countries in a safe and conducive manner.

Quoting the age-old saying " we cannot negotiate if you are pointing a gun at me", Roselan said that it was true in the context of the sub-regional grouping, which was launched in 1994. " We must all retract and go back to the drawing board, rethink and revisit our strategy and go back to the negotiating table," he told Bernama.

Roselan was commenting on the recent statement by Former Philippines' President Fidel Ramos with regard to the standoff in Lahad Datu in the east coast of Sabah, that the BIMP-EAGA should be revived by the countries concerned as the grouping was the key to improve the people's conditions in south Philippines, Borneo Island and adjacent areas. " The BIMP-EAGA is the win-win strategy if we are looking from the perspective of a better, more prosperous, more peaceful, more harmonious and more sustainable future for all peoples," Ramos was quoted as saying.

Ramos said the potentials of the BIMP-EAGA were so great that even foreign local governments such as Australia's Northern Territory and Western Australia states had joined the grouping as associates. Ramos said that during his administration, he tried to set up a corporation that would develop

the BIMP-EAGA sub-region. The company is to be jointly run by Malaysia, the Sulu Sultanate's heirs and private sector partners.

The company's revenue can substitute the annual RM5, 300 as the rent to the sultanate's heirs, Ramos said. In this respect, Roselan acknowledged Ramos' role in the establishment of BIMP-EAGA, saying that the Former Philippines' President was both vocal and wise when he initiated the BIMP-EAGA concept together with Malaysia's former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.