

NO NEED TO CUT TIES

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. — There is no reason why Malaysia should cut off diplomatic ties with the Philippines over the Sabah issue, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said there was no basis for concern over allegations by a Filipino Minister that rebels were setting up a training camp in Sabah to launch terrorist actions against the Philippines.

He said President Marcos had given his assurance that the opinion voiced by Philippines Defence Minister Juan Enrile was his personal opinion and not that of the Philippines Government.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir was commenting on the call by Sabah Chief Minister Datuk Harris Salleh that Malaysia cut off diplomatic ties with the Philippines if the latter did not drop its Sabah claim and continued to "harass" the State with allegations of harbouring Muslim and anti-Marcos rebels in its territory.

Speaking to reporters after the Umno Supreme Council meeting here, he said the question of whether Malaysia should cut off diplomatic ties with the Philippines should not arise at all.

President Marcos had agreed to drop the Sabah claim at the Asean Summit Meeting here in 1977.

Asked whether any follow-up action had been taken since the Summit, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said: "We are looking forward to things being

done. There are indications that things are being done and will be done."

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Musa Hitam, speaking at a Press conference last night in Labuan, said Malaysia still held strongly the spirit of Asean and any problems that arose could be solved through normal diplomatic channels.

Datuk Musa said Malaysia would not allow any matter "to rupture the spirit of Asean that we have nurtured for so long".

Datuk Musa said while he respected the views expressed by Datuk Harris "as he represents the people of Sabah and whatever he says re-

fects the sentiments of Sabah," breaking diplomatic relations would be an "extreme and serious move that represented a government's ultimate choice in its international relations."

He reiterated that the Government would seek clarification through normal diplomatic channels regarding accusations and views expressed in the Philippines.

"We're still not certain about the real back-

ground" to the stories that have been originating from there in the past few weeks. A few questions need to be answered," he said, referring to the allegation by Mr Enrile that anti-Marcos rebels were setting up a training camp in Jampiras, outside Sandakan, to launch terrorist actions before the 1984 Philippines elections.

Arms

There has also been a move in the Philippines National Assembly to revive the country's claim on Sabah which President Marcos had said his Government would take steps to drop.

In the past few weeks too, there have been increasing reports from the Philippines that the East Coast of Sabah is being used as a base for Muslim rebels from the Moro National Liberation Front to ship arms and ammunition to their counterparts fighting for an independent Muslim nation in southern Philippines.

Datuk Musa last night reiterated that the Malaysian Government would not be a party to any hostile acts against the Philippines, using Sabah as a base.

He also emphasised that the issue of the Philippines claim on Sabah did not arise at all as Malaysia had always clearly stated that it did not recognise the claim.