

Manila's claim to Sabah discussed

By OUR REPORTER P

THE Philippine claim to Sabah was discussed in a two-hour private meeting between Filipino Vice-President Salvador Laurel and Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad last Friday, the Prime Minister's Press secretary, Encik Jalaludin Bahaudin, said in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

The leaders discussed a range of issues. The Sabah claim was brought up by Mr Laurel, who stopped over in Kuala Lumpur on his way back to Manila after the Asean foreign ministers' meeting in Bali last week.

Mr Laurel, who is also Philippine foreign minister, told reporters in Manila last weekend that he and Dr Mahathir resolved to settle the Sabah question as soon as possible.

"I think we made a forward move but I cannot discuss it at the moment due to a mutual agreement not to do so," he said.

He described the Sabah issue as "one of the principal irritants" between the two countries and added that the negotiations will continue.

Malaysia's long-held position is that the Philippine claim has no basis.

Mr Laurel also said he invited Dr Mahathir to visit the Philippines.