

RESOLVING SABAH CLAIM ISSUE

No guarantee of settlement: Dr M

THE Philippine Government has not given any guarantee of a **settlement** of the Sabah claim but **has** said it will work hard for a solution, Prime Minister Datuk **Seri** Dr Mahathir **Mohamad** **said** yesterday.

Malaysia is prepared to wait for the process towards a settlement as had been conveyed to him by President Corazon Aquino, he added.

Mrs Aquino had explained the legal processes involved, that is, the President must have the Senate's agreement first to resolve the issue of that country's claim on Sabah, he said.

"We are prepared to **acknowledge** this," he told reporters at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport on his return from attending the Third **Asean** Summit in Manila.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said Mrs Aquino had met him there to explain the matter.

Malaysia had earlier hoped the processes could be completed and the claim renounced before the **Asean** heads of government began their meeting but this could not be achieved, he said.

The question of urgency for a settlement therefore no longer arose, he added. The issue had draaaed on for 25 **years** and

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THE US State Department congratulated **Asean** on its **just**-completed summit but said it opposed the organisation's call for a **nuclear-free zone in South-East Asia**.

Deputy State Department spokeswoman **Phyllis Oakley**, briefing reporters, said the US views the alliance as "an outstanding example of a successful, responsible, regional organisation, and we are pleased to have excellent relations with its members individually and collectively".

However, she added, it rejects the reported call for a ban on nuclear weapons in the region. "In our view of our worldwide regional security responsibilities, we believe a nuclear weapons-free zone in South-East Asia would tend to undermine the policy of deterrence which has served us all well." — AP

started getting attention again recently.

The Philippine House Representatives approved recently a Bill deleting mention of Sabah in the delineation of the Philippine boundary but the Senate in a parallel Bill currently before it had introduced three new conditions for the dropping of the claim.

The Senate Bill among other things wants Malaysia to conclude treaties of cooperation and amity and a border agreement with the Philippines. It also wants Malaysia to resolve the question of the proprietary rights of the heirs of the Sultan of Sulu.

Asked about the state of Ma-

laysia-Philippine relations after his trip to Manila, the Prime Minister said he did not make an official visit but only attended an international conference.

This was the first time a Malaysian Prime Minister had set foot on **Philippines** soil in 25 years.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said he was unable to say whether Malaysia's relations with the Philippines since then had become closer or the opposite, but stressed that "ties between the two countries now are growing closer".

On the security aspects of the conference, he said the conference went well and there were no security problems. This

meant the Philippine Government had given serious attention to the preparations.

The Prime Minister said the security measures taken by Manila should be appreciated because they enabled the meeting to be held smoothly, peacefully and without any **disruption**.

He expressed his thanks to the Philippine and Malaysian security personnel for their role in **maintaining** security during the summit.

In Manila, officials of the Association of South-East Asian Nations yesterday welcomed Prince **Norodom Sihanouk's** decision to resume peace talks with the Vietnam-backed Phnom Penh Government.

Prince Sihanouk, head of the coalition government of **Democratic Kampuchea**, reversed his earlier decision to cancel further talks with Prime **Minister** Hun Sen. He said there had been **asean** criticisms of the **ending** of the talks.

A Philippine Foreign Affairs Department spokesman said Prince **Sihanouk's** decision to reopen the talks was a welcome development. "But we are not **saying** everything is back on track until we find out what **happens**," he said.