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PHILIPPINE CLAIM ON SABAH HAMPERING BILATERAL RELATIONS, SAYS PM  
Mahathir-Sabah

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 15 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today said it was difficult for Malaysia to have +full relations+ with the Philippines when the latter had not dropped its claim on Sabah.

As such, Malaysia would not be able to sign the treaty of amity and cooperation and border control with the Philippines, he said.

+As far as we are concerned, while there is this claim it is difficult for us to have full relations. We cannot very well sign (the treaty) when there is a claim directed at us,+ he told reporters after launching the Kuala Lumpur City Centre project in Jalan Ampang, here.

Commenting on visiting Philippine Foreign Secretary Roberto Romulo's statement that the only stumbling block to the country's plan to drop the claim was the Senate, Dr Mahathir said it was entirely up to the Philippines to decide on the matter.

+This is entirely their internal matter. We cannot do anything here as it is really up to them. If they want to drop the claim the procedure is theirs...the consent is also theirs,+ he said. -- more

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Mahathir-Sabah 2 (last) Kuala Lumpur

Yesterday, Romulo told Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi that the Philippine Government did not wish to pursue the claim on Sabah and that the present administration was following the same policy as that of the previous governments.

Asked whether he was disappointed with the Philippines for not having dropped the claim after all these years, Dr Mahathir said there was nothing to be disappointed about as there was nothing that Malaysia could do.

On the election in Thailand, Dr Mahathir said he was happy that it went off well and hoped that it would be a good step forward for the country.

+I congratulate the winners and I hope this is a very good step forward for Thailand. We look forward to working with them,+ he said.

Four of Thailand's anti-military parties reached preliminary agreement yesterday to form a coalition government following victory in Sunday's election. -- Bernama