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Mahathir-Islands

M'SIA CONSIDERS SIPADAN/LIGITAN ISSUE SETTLED, SAYS PM

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 7 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today Malaysia will accept whatever decision by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on the overlapping claims with Indonesia over the Sipadan and Ligitan islands.

Describing the matter as settled, he said Kuala Lumpur would accept the court's decision even if it was in favour of Indonesia.

"I feel that whatever decision, whether it favours Malaysia or Indonesia, is not the issue because we have agreed to accept the (ICJ) decision," he told reporters after bidding farewell to Indonesian President Suharto at the Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah Airport in Subang, near here.

President Suharto arrived here yesterday for a two-day visit.

Dr Mahathir was replying to questions from Indonesian reporters on what Malaysia would do if the court decided that the two islands off Sabah's east coast belonged to Indonesia.

Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi had said earlier that Malaysia and Indonesia had decided to resolve the 27-year-old issue by referring to it to the ICJ for a decision.

The decision was made at a meeting between Dr Mahathir and Suharto at the Prime Minister's Department here this morning.

The prime minister said Kuala Lumpur-Jakarta ties would not be affected if the ICJ decided that the two islands belonged to Indonesia.

"What is important is that we must maintain the good relations between Indonesia and Malaysia," he said.

Dr Mahathir said although the final decision had not been made, Malaysia and Indonesia had agreed on the method of resolution, that is by referring the matter to the ICJ.

He said both countries must prepare the documents to support their claims for submission to the ICJ.

To another question, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia would open up palm oil estates in the eastern part of Indonesia).

On Suharto's visit, he said it was productive and they discussed not only bilateral problems but also international and Asean matters. --

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