

01 JUL 2001

Mahathir-Sabah

DR MAHATHIR ASSURES SABAH PEOPLE THAT GOVT WILL DEFEND THEIR STATE

KUALA LUMPUR, July 1 (Bernama) -- The Prime Minister today assured the people of Sabah that the Federal Government will continue to defend the state as part of Malaysia.

"With God's will we have decided that Sabah will continue to remain a part of Malaysia," Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said when replying to a student from Universiti Sabah Malaysia (UMS) during a dialogue with students from institutions of higher learning at Universiti Malaya here.

The UMS student echoed the concern of Sabah undergraduates and the people in the state over the Philippines' move to intervene in the case involving Indonesia's claim to the Malaysian islands of Sipadan and Ligitan off Sabah, now before the World Court at the Hague.

Meanwhile the Philippines had submitted that the documents that Malaysia and Indonesia had submitted to support their claims be surrendered to it.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia had referred the claim to the two islands to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) for a decision and hoped the court would arrive at a just decision.

"...We will do whatever it took to defend our rights over Sabah," he said.

"Malaysia knows that the islands of Sipadan and Ligitan apart from Sabah belong to us."

On the UMS student's proposal that the Government set up a special body to study the foreign claim to the two islands, Dr Mahathir said the government had already assigned a body to study the grounds why Malaysia had the right to reject the claims for submitting to the ICJ.

Dr Mahathir described the Philippine's move to intervene, after Indonesia had filed its claim, as fishing in troubled waters.

-- BERNAMA

RZS ZS AAM