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PM: Philippines must accept ICJ ruling on Sipadan and Ligitan

PETALING JAYA, Sat. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today said the Philippines must accept the decision of the International Court of Justice pertaining to the issue on the claim over the Sipadan and Ligitan islands.

The Prime Minister said all parties which had agreed to refer the case to the ICJ should now accept its decision.

"When we decide to go to court, we must be ready to accept the court's decision although it was hard to accept.

"The courts have also made decisions against us previously, such as the banning of Umno. But we had to accept it," Dr Mahathir said.

He was speaking upon his arrival from South Korea and Japan where he had gone on holiday after attending the Apec summit in Shanghai, China.

The Prime Minister said the Government would accept whatever decision made by the ICJ on the matter even if it were not in Malaysia's favour.

Dr Mahathir was commenting on the Philippines' reaction to the ICJ's decision not to grant its application to intervene in the case.

On Oct 23, the ICJ comprising 15 judges, rejected an application by the Philippines to intervene in the Pulau Ligitan and Pulau Sipadan dispute.

It ruled that the Philippines had no interest of a legal nature that might be affected by any reasoning or interpretation that would be made in the court regarding the dispute.

Court president Gilbert Guillaume also said that a document relied upon by the Philippines as a "primal source" for its claim to a part of North Borneo, a document dated Jan 22 1878, signed by the Sultan of Sulu which granted a part of Sabah to two Europeans, Overbeck and Dent, was not a document relied upon by Malaysia or Indonesia in the present dispute.

The Sulu document did not cover the islands of Sipadan and Ligitan.

The Philippines' application to the court to intervene in the case between Malaysia and Indonesia, while also expressly stating its absence of interest in the disputed islands, had been objected to by both disputants.

The application was made under Article 62 of the court's statute, which makes a provision for intervention by a party not a disputant to the case if it could show that it had legal interest.

Both Malaysia and Indonesia objected to the Philippine application which was heard by the court from June 25 to 29.

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