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Rais: US should be brought to the ICJ

Joniston Bangkuai

KOTA KINABALU, Mon. - The United States should be brought to the International Court of Justice to face charges of causing the death of innocent people in its war against the Taliban in Afghanistan.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Rais Yatim said Malaysia should initiate the tabling of a resolution in the United Nations and the filing of a petition to bring the US to the ICJ.

"If our Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad deems it appropriate to initiate a petition to bring the United States to the ICJ then we should do it," Rais said at the TV3 studio here after appearing on the 'Malaysia Hari Ini' programme today.

Labelling the US as a "terrorising state" for causing the deaths of civilians, he said a petition has to be filed and supported by two thirds of the UN member nations for the US to be tried in the ICJ.

However, Rais doubted if such a petition would get the support from other countries considering the influence the US and its allies such as Britain and France wield.

"Many countries might not support such a move for fear that the US will sabotage their business and trade," he said, adding that if such fear continue to prevail, there would be no peace in the world.

Rais said the indiscriminate attack by the US against the Taliban had not only led to the deaths of numerous civilians but also inflicted untold misery to the Afghans.

"The innocent people in Afghanistan should not be made to suffer because of their hatred against one person (Osama bin Laden) whom they suspected to be behind the Sept 11 terror attack in US."

Echoing Dr Mahathir's view, Rais said waging a war would not solve the problem of terrorism.

On the Philippines refusal to accept the ICJ's decision pertaining to the issue on the claim over Sipadan and Ligitan islands, Rais said it appeared that the Philippines had no respect for the law.

"The decision was made after the ICJ had heard and deliberated on the Philippines argument over the matter and as such, they should not only accept but should respect the decision," he said.

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

On the bearing of the ICJ's decision on the Philippines claim over Sabah, Rais said there was no basis to the claim as the people of Sabah (then North Borneo) had overwhelmingly decided for the State to join the federation of Malaysia in 1963.

The decision to opt for independence from the British colony and to join the federation of Malaysia was made in a referendum conducted by Cobbold Commission in 1963.

"If the Philippines was adamant to pursue the claim (over Sabah) I am afraid that its role in Asean would be affected," he said.