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Arroyo-Sabah

SABAH ISSUE DISCUSSED AT MAHATHIR-ARROYO MEETING

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 8 (Bernama) -- Malaysia and the Philippines have agreed to seek a cordial resolution of the Philippines' claim of Sabah, said President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo.

She said that her country's claim of Sabah was discussed during her one-to-one meeting with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday.

She said both of them agreed that Malaysia and the Philippines should move forward towards a cordial resolution of the issue.

"Of course we understand that we'll have to do this slowly and with extensive consultations with our constituents.

"So, we are going to have to form panels to study how this issue can be approached," she said at a media conference on the second day of her three-day visit which ends tomorrow.

Arroyo said she would instruct the Philippine Secretary of Foreign Affairs to start working on the matter.

"It is only now that Prime Minister Mahathir and I even discussed the possibility of finally resolving the issue because previously it has always been swept under the carpet," she said.

She was also asked whether there was a possibility that Manila would drop its claim over Sabah.

She said: "No. No. No. I'm not saying that. I'm just saying it will take a long time and extensive consultations to resolve the issue. So, I'm not prepared to give any statements about that now."

The President said she would have to consult the people in Southern Philippines and other Filipinos on the issue.

When asked about why the Philippines was seeking to intervene in the territorial dispute over Sipadan and Ligitan Islands involving Malaysia and Indonesia at the International Court of Justice, Arroyo said Manila was bound to intervene in any international proceeding that had to do with the islands in question.

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