

# Philippine govt told to say sorry

(SUN) 15 OCT 2002

**PUTRAJAYA:** The Philippine government should apologise to Malaysia for its rash action over the allegation by a 13-year-old girl that she was raped while being held at a temporary detention depot in Sabah. Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said yesterday.

He said the Philippine government should also learn a lesson from the incident - that it should not be carried away by wild allegations made by certain quarters in the media.

"If the Philippine government says the girl is their citizen, they are wrong. The natural thing (to do), without us asking, is for them to (say) 'sorry, we have made a mistake'," he told repor-

ters after opening the Consuls General and Consuls conference at a hotel here.

Syed Hamid said this when asked to comment on press reports quoting police as confirming that the girl is a Malaysian citizen and not a Philippine national as reported earlier.

Asked whether Malaysia has received a response expressing regret from the Philippines over the incident, he said the Philippine government claimed the matter was played up by the media and not by the authorities.

"They say the government didn't do it, it's their media, they should have used the proper channel.

"If our government adopts an approach to listen to allegations by oth-

ers without investigating, this would be the result.

"I hope the Philippine government will be careful before it listens to wild allegations," he said.

Syed Hamid said the case was proof of certain groups purposely fanning anger against Malaysia.

"To me, it is important we put a stop to such actions," he said.

The rape allegation gained the attention of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad when Philippine President Gloria Arroyo wrote to him, asking the Malaysian government to investigate the allegation because the underaged girl is said to be a Philippine citizen.