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Mahathir-Sipadan

DR M: SIPADAN-LIGITAN DECISION SHOULD NOT AFFECT M'SIA-INDONESIA TIES

PETALING JAYA, Dec 17 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said he does not think the ruling by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) that the Sipadan and Ligitan islands off Borneo belong to Malaysia would affect bilateral ties between Malaysia and Indonesia.

"Both sides have agreed to refer the matter to the ICJ, and that decision means that we are willing to accept whatever ruling that was made.

"There was a possibility that the decision would not be in our favour. (Even) if it were not in our favour, we would have accepted," the Prime Minister told a press conference at the Air Force base in Subang here tonight on his return from a two-day visit to Japan.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia hoped that there would not be any more claims on the islands by anyone following the ICJ ruling.

The court's decision today is binding and settles a 30-year dispute over the sovereignty of the islands between Indonesia and Malaysia.

In a 16:1 decision, the court ruled in favour of Malaysia on the basis that the islands have been in the control and administration of Malaysia.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia had all along felt that the islands belonged to it and had all the evidence to back its claim.

However, the ICJ had to hear the arguments of the Indonesian side and it was possible that Indonesia might have other information, he said.

"But we are thankful that this problem has finally been settled peacefully," he said.

-- BERNAMA

SR HK YBY