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Syed Hamid-Philippines

PHILIPPINE GOVT SHOULD APOLOGISE TO M'SIA OVER RAPE CASE - SYED HAMID

PUTRAJAYA, Oct 14 (Bernama) -- 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 today.

He said the Philippine Government should also learn a lesson from the incident not to be carried away by wild allegations made by certain quarters through the media.

"If the Philippine Government says the girl is their citizen, they are wrong. The natural thing without us asking is for them to (say) sorry, we have made a mistake," he told reporters after opening the Consul Generals and Consuls conference at a hotel here.

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

Asked whether Malaysia had 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 others without investigating, this is the effect.

"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 arousing 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 a letter to him asking the Malaysian Government to investigate the allegation because the underage girl is said to be a Philippine citizen.

-- BERNAMA

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