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# No way to determine migrants' loyalty: Dr M

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> ... but action cannot be taken against all Sabahans of Filipino origin

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**KUALA LUMPUR:** Former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad (pix) has admitted that there are many Malaysians of Filipino origin who had migrated to Sabah and there is no way to determine their loyalty to the country.

"We have always had people who migrated to Malaysia and became our citizens.

"We don't know which one of them is loyal and which one is not," said Mahathir during a press conference yesterday.

He said as such, action cannot be taken against all Sabahans of Filipino origin for alleged ties with the Sulu invaders, led by Agbimuddin Kiram, who were holed up in Lahad Datu since Feb 12.

"We accept them as our citizens and although some of them may act against the country, most

of them are loyal," he said.

Mahathir had come under fire following testimonies at the ongoing Royal Commission of Inquiry into the problems of illegal immigrants in Sabah that citizenships were granted to foreigners in the state, including those of Filipino origin, through dubious means.

Gua Musang MP Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah had on Sunday warned that the current population of Sabah "raised the possibility of the invasion escalating into a different dimension in the near future".

Rumours of an uprising among resident southern Filipinos in Sabah surfaced following incidents of violence between armed men and villagers in Lahad Datu over the weekend.

Mahathir had on Sunday also reportedly warned that the self-proclaimed Sulu royal army, supporters of Sulu "sultan" Jamalul Kiram III,



were unlikely to admit defeat or surrender peacefully.

Following yesterday's early morning attacks by the armed forces, a spokesman for Agbimuddin, told the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* that Agbimuddin had escaped the bombings and was in a "safe place". Mahathir also said there are parties who could never see any good from actions taken by the government, including justification for launching a full-scale attack against the intruders after 20 days.

He added that the Sulu "sultanate" had acted as if it was a sovereign state when, in fact, it no longer existed after being conquered by the Spaniards. Mahathir also denied, when asked, that the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) fighters had been trained in Malaysia.

"We have never trained them, they are only making such claims," he said.