

DR M: I BACKED HALT TO SULU PAYMENTS

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NST- 25/7/2022

But Najib should have studied matter first, says ex-PM

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TUN Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday said he supported the decision made by former prime minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak in 2013 to cease the annual cession payment to the heirs of the sultan of Sulu following the incursion in Lahad Datu, Sabah.

The New Straits Times Press reported that the former two-time prime minister, however, raised questions on whether the decision was made according to the provisions of law apart from fulfilling all obligations to terminate the old agreement to avoid

future disputes.

“At the time, Najib said he would not pay (the cession payment).”

“And at that time, I supported his decision. (However), he was the one who made the decision.

“I was, however, told that the decision was not referred to the cabinet and Dewan Rakyat (in 2013), and that he was making his own decision.”

Dr Mahathir said this after a talk on the future of online teaching and learning here yesterday.

The Langkawi member of parliament was a panel member in the programme organised by the PTTI online education platform.

Elaborating on the issue, he said: “We should have conducted a study to determine if the heirs were responsible for the attack (on Lahad Datu).”

“Only then should we cease the payment.

“This, however, was not the case.

“Without any study done, we ceased the payment.”

He said because of that, those who claimed they were the heirs of the sultan of Sulu had taken the matter to the International Court of Arbitration.

“There was no such problem previously. Every year, we made the payment.

“When we decided to cease the payment, they took the matter to the court in Spain.

“We, however, did not recognise the court in Spain.

“Before a decision was made, both parties should have presented their submissions to defend their position.”

He cited the case of Pedra Branca, where Malaysia agreed with the parties who made such a claim and referred the matter to court.

It was reported that assets of two Petronas subsidiaries in Azerbaijan were seized by bailiffs for the heirs of the now-defunct Sulu sultanate, who were claiming US\$14.92 billion from Malaysia earlier this month.

Bernama, which quoted the *Fi-*



Former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad speaking at a programme organised by the PTTI online education platform in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. PIC BY ASYRAF HAMZAH

nancial Times, reported that lawyers for the plaintiffs reportedly seized Petronas' assets registered in Luxembourg — Petronas Azerbaijan (Shah Deniz) and Petronas South Caucasus — with a reported value of more than US\$2 billion.

Since then, Malaysia has been granted, by the Paris Court of Appeal in France, a stay on the enforcement of the final award on claims by parties claiming to be heirs and successors-in-interest to sultan Jamalul Kiram II.