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Osu says an island would be ideal as a refugee camp

KOTA KINABALU, Fri. - An island will be the ideal site for the proposed special camp for Filipinos fleeing to Sabah to escape a military attack on rebels in Southern Philippines.

Chief Minister Datuk Seri Osu Sukam said guarding and monitoring would be easier if the war refugees were confined to an island.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had yesterday said that Filipinos fleeing to Malaysia following the military assault would be treated as war refugees and placed in special camp.

There has been fear of Filipinos flooding Sabah after the Philippines military launched an attack on the Abu Sayyaf holding 19 hostages on the Southern Philippines island of Jolo.

Speaking to reporters after launching a mass blood donation campaign here, Osu said the State Government would discuss with the National Security Council on the most suitable island for the purpose.

Osu said the sensitivity of the local community must be taken into account when deciding on the island for the camp.

"We (Sabah) have so many islands and which ever island was chosen must not pose a problem to the locals," he said.

On the status of the Filipino illegal immigrants already in Sabah, Osu said efforts would continue to round them up for deportation.

"The Filipino illegal immigrants and war refugees are two separate issues," he said.

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