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Chong-Philippines

CHONG WELCOMES PHILIPPINE CULTURAL OFFICE TO SABAH

KOTA KINABALU, Oct 24 (Bernama) -- Chief Minister Datuk Chong Kah Kiat today welcomed the establishment of the Philippine Economic and Cultural Office (Peco) in Sabah next year.

He said the decision to set up such an office augured well for Malaysia-Philippine relations.

" We are very happy and really welcome the final decision of the Philippine Government which will further strengthen relations between the Philippines and Malaysia particularly Sabah," he told reporters after chairing the state cabinet meeting here today.

Chong said this in response to a statement by Philippine Ambassador to Malaysia Jose Brillantes recently that the office would be set up early next year.

Brillantes had said the office would be headed by a director and was expected to attend to the needs of the many Filipinos living and working in Sabah.

The setting up of the office was announced by Philippine President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo during her first official visit to Malaysia recently.

On the 10 percent salary increase for Sabah civil servants, Chong said the state cabinet had asked Finance Minister Datuk Musa Aman to get additional information on the matter from the Federal Government before a decision could be made.

"We need to study the financial implications (of the increase) as Sabah has the most number of civil servants," he said.

He said Sarawak had not more than 20,000 state civil servants while Sabah had about 37,000 civil servants.

Last Friday Prime Minister and Finance Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad announced a 10 percent salary increase and a half month bonus or a minimum of RM1,000 to be paid this month and next month for civil servants.

Musa had said the Sabah Government would consider emulating the Federal Government's move to grant a 10 percent salary increase and half-month bonus for civil servants.

--BERNAMA

HAK HAK AAM