

Arroyo seeks KL's help in repatriating nationals

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MANILA, Tues. — Philippine President Gloria Arroyo has asked Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad for help in regulating the massive repatriation of illegal Filipino workers in Sabah.

Arroyo made the request at a meeting with a Malaysian delegation led by Tan Sri Bernard Dompok, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department, officials said.

Press Undersecretary Roberto Capco remarked that during the meeting, Arroyo said her government was "hoping there would be humane treatment of Filipinos being deported from Sabah".

Large numbers of Filipinos who were living in Malaysia have been deported in recent weeks after Kuala

Lumpur imposed tough laws where anyone found guilty of illegal entry or harbouring illegal immigrants faced a mandatory six months in jail and up to six strokes of the cane.

The Malaysian Government has denied allegations that Filipinos were being abused as they are being deported on ships that carry them to the southern Philippines.

Foreign Affairs Undersecretary Tony Rodriguez said since February about 64,000 Filipinos had left Sabah and that an estimated 4,000 Filipinos were still waiting to be deported.

He said the Malaysian Government had agreed to a Philippine request to extend the deadline for illegal Filipinos to voluntarily leave Sabah to Aug 24. — AFP