

# Manila raps groups calling for boycott

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MANILA: Philippine Trade and Industry Secretary Mar Roxas yesterday opposed calls by militant groups to boycott Malaysian products, saying it would affect two-way trade.

"Let us not aggravate the situation, especially when Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has already ordered a moratorium on the deportation of Filipinos. Our diplomatic efforts seem to be working," he told reporters.

*Migrante International*, an alliance of migrant workers, has called for a boycott of Malaysian products to express outrage over the alleged "inhumane" treatment of deportees from Sabah.

Roxas appealed to those concerned to exercise restraint, saying that the Philippines enjoys healthy trade ties with Malaysia.

The Philippines imports electrical machinery, semiconductors and agricultural produce from Malaysia.

Roxas noted that the Philippines earned US\$1 billion (RM3.8 billion) in exports to Malaysia in 2001 out of the total US\$22 billion (RM83.6 billion) export earnings for that year.

In KOTA KINABALU, Nur Jaafar, presidential advisor to Philippine President Gloria Arroyo, admitted that there are not enough Filipino diplomatic officers to process

the travel documents to facilitate the deportation of its citizens from Sabah.

The number was not enough even for one detention centre, he told reporters, after visiting 321 Filipino illegal immigrants in the temporary detention centre in Menggatal, near here.

On the condition of the inmates there, he hoped the Malaysian authorities would give more attention to women

and children.

"We are asking the authorities to make some additional improvements for smaller children, as they will develop a psychological attitude of hatred towards your government and your people," he said.

In SANDAKAN, Sabah Commissioner of Police Datuk Pahlawan Ramli Yusuff said there have not been reports on allegations of sex-

ual abuse of detained Filipino women.

He was commenting on a report in a Philippine daily, the *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, quoting a recently-expelled Filipino, one Mohsin Akbirul, as alleging that seven policemen in Tawau were making sex slaves of detained Filipino women.

Nur Jaafar said he has passed on the matter to the Malaysian authorities.