

Rape probe begins

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by Charles Ramendran
newsdesk@thesundaily.com

KUALA LUMPUR: A special team from the CID has been set up to investigate allegations that a 13-year-old Filipina was raped while in custody at a temporary detention centre in Kota Kinabalu.

Federal CID director Datuk Salleh Mat Som said police had met the consul-general of the Philippines Embassy, Luis T. Cruz, and had sought his cooperation to trace the victim who is believed to be in Zamboanga, to help in investigations and identify the suspects.

He said police are also seeking the assistance of Interpol.

"We view this very seriously but everything including the background of the victim will need to be checked when we meet her," he said.

"If she is unable to come here then we will send our team to the Philippines."

The team headed by Special In-

vestigations branch chief Asst Comm Takbir Ahmad also comprises personnel from the sexual offences division of the federal serious crimes branch.

On Thursday, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Mahathir Mohamad ordered an investigation after Philippines President Gloria Arroyo had sent a letter to him expressing her regret over the alleged rape.

Meanwhile, in the light of the steep rise in sexual crimes involving minors, Salleh said police with the support of several government organisations and the British Consulate have proposed to set up a Victim Crisis Centre to provide emotional and psychological rehabilitation to victims.

"Trained personnel stationed at the centre will be able handle the delicate situation the victims are in," he said.

He added the centre has been allocated premises in a building next to the National Monument and will be operational by the year-end.