

29 AUG 2002

ARROYO SENDING RAMOS TO MEET MAHATHIR

MANILA, Aug 29 (Bernama) -- President Gloria Arroyo is sending former president Fidel Ramos to Malaysia to discuss with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad the plight of deportees from Sabah.

Senior officials, asking not to be named, today said Arroyo is taking the move after seeing for herself the "appalling conditions" of deportees in Bongao, Tawi-Tawi.

Arroyo flew to Bongao to meet the thousands of deportees, including women and children who reportedly suffered "inhuman treatment" by Malaysian police in Sabah.

She distributed medicines and food supplies to the deportees and took time to talk to them and hear their complaints.

Officials said Arroyo wants Ramos to discuss with Dr Mahathir ways and means to ensure an "orderly and humanly" deportation of undocumented Filipinos from Sabah.

The former president has assumed the role of an elder statesman since he finished his term in 1996, travelling to various countries on speaking engagements and goodwill missions.

While he was president from 1992 to 1996, Ramos had numerous meetings with Dr Mahathir which led to a surge in Malaysian investments in the Philippines.

-- BERNAMA

ALJ AKT RM