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Philippines-Ties

RAMOS EXPECTED TO MEND TIES WITH KL

MANILA, Aug 30 (Bernama) -- Former Phillipine President Fidel Ramos' proposed meeting with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is seen as an attempt to mend bilateral ties strained by the issue of Filipino migrants, an official said today.

"What I know is Ramos is very close to Prime Minister Mahathir," President Gloria Arroyo's spokesman Ignacio Bunye told reporters.

Arroyo said Wednesday that she was shortly sending Ramos to Kuala Lumpur to take up with Dr Mahathir the idea of an "orderly and humane" deportation of undocumented Filipinos from Sabah.

"His trip will open a lot of doors and hopefully will speed up the solution to this problem," Bunye said.

Ramos, however, has yet to issue a statement on whether he has accepted Arroyo's request to travel to Malaysia.

Arroyo's move came as Justice Department officials ordered a crackdown on Malaysians illegally entering Mindanao in what analysts described as a case of tit-for-tat.

Justice Secretary Hernando Perez told a media conference that some 1,500 "people from Malaysia" were entering the country every week through the Zamboanga city port.

He claimed that most, if not all, of them were carrying fake Philippine passports.

"I have directed our bureaus to determine who are the holders of these fake passports and to cause the filing of charges against them," he said.

-- BERNAMA

ALJ MAM RM