

10 SEP 2002

Rape-Lawyer

M'SIAN LAWYER HIRED FOR ALLEGED RAPE VICTIM

MANILA, Sept 10 (Bernama) -- The Philippines has hired a Malaysian lawyer to represent a 13-year-old deportee allegedly raped by a Malaysian policeman in Sabah.

According to a statement from the Department of Foreign Affairs, here, Gordon Jones was chosen by the Philippines embassy in Kuala Lumpur after Malaysia backed Manila's efforts to prosecute the case.

Malaysia's response came after President Gloria Arroyo expressed outrage over the incident in a recent letter to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad who, in turn, ordered an immediate probe.

However, Philippine ambassador to Malaysia Jose Brillantes, when contacted by Bernama in Kuala Lumpur, declined to confirm nor deny the selection of Jones as the lawyer.

"I'm not in a position to confirm or to deny that. Personally, I have no idea who he (Jones) is," he said.

He said the Philippine embassy was in the midst of selecting a suitable candidate to undertake the case.

"We have shortlisted them. We are going to study the list, he said.

The girl, whose identity was kept under wraps, was allegedly raped by a Malaysian policeman inside a detention centre in Sabah before she was deported to Tawi-Tawi.

Meanwhile, Senate majority floor leader Loren Legarda today asked Arroyo to include an heir of the Sultan of Sulu in a council she had formed to tackle the country's claim to Sabah.

"The appointment of Sultan Jamalul Kiram III, one of the heirs of the Sultan of Sulu, as a private sector representative in the Sabah claim council should be seriously considered," she told a media conference.

She argued that the government's claim on Sabah was anchored on the family's proprietary interest.

The council, which was reconstituted through an executive order signed by Arroyo on Sept 2, is composed of five Cabinet members, five congressmen, five senators and three private sector representatives.

-- BERNAMA

ALJ AHH RM LES JK