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Chong: We will continue to nab illegals

KOTA KINABALU, Mon. - Operations to arrest illegal immigrants in Sabah will continue despite the temporary halt in the repatriation of Filipino illegals from the State.

Chief Minister Datuk Chong Kah Kiat said the police have a duty to pick up those without proper documents and send them to temporary holding centres.

The operation to round up illegal immigrants under Ops Nyah II Bersepadu began on Feb 26.

"The operations will continue," he said after chairing a State Security Committee meeting today.

Present were State Secretary Datuk K.Y. Mustapha, State Commissioner of Police Datuk Ramli Yussuf, and Fifth Infantry Brigade Commander Brig-Jen Mohd Yasin Yahya.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had said on Saturday that the Government had agreed to a request from Philippine President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo for a temporary halt to the repatriation of Filipino illegal immigrants from Sabah.

The Prime Minister said repatriation would resume after Philippine officials inspected the three detention centres in Sabah and were satisfied that their nationals there were not ill-treated.

Chong, who is SSC chairman, said the State Government will assist in facilitating the visit of the Philippine delegation to the holding centres in Kota Kinabalu, Sandakan and Tawau.

"We will welcome them as our guests and extend all assistance," Chong said.

Chong noted that complaints of mistreatment only surfaced following the Government's action to repatriate them.

He said the illegal immigrants at the detention centres were referred to the hospitals immediately when they complained of illness.

On whether he would discuss the setting up of a Philippine Consulate in Sabah, Chong said Arroyo had agreed to it.