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Malaysia-Philippines

M'SIA AND P'PINES DO NOT WANT TO SENSATIONALISE IMMIGRANT ISSUE

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 13 (Bernama) -- Malaysia and the Philippines do not want the deportation of Filipino illegal immigrants to be sensationalised to the extent that it jeopardises the existing good relations between the two countries, Defence Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said today.

He said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had directed that an investigation be conducted into complaints of alleged mistreatment of Philippine citizens at the temporary holding centres.

Based on the investigation, Malaysia would take action against any official found to have breached the law, he said in a joint statement after meeting Philippine Defence Secretary Angelo Reyes at the ministry, here.

Najib said that both governments wished to reaffirm their close and warm diplomatic relations as stressed by Dr Mahathir and President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo earlier.

"These close ties are very much valued by both countries and will be continued and further strengthened," he said.

The Philippines recently questioned Malaysia's deportation of Filipino illegal immigrants and alleged that a 13-year-old deportee was raped at one of Malaysia's temporary holding centres.

The joint statement, issued after a two-hour meeting between Najib and Reyes, also sought the commitment of both nations to overcome terrorist activities in the region.

"Malaysia and the Philippines are committed to operationalising the trilateral agreement signed together with Indonesia in the war against terrorism," Najib said.

He said the Malaysian and the Philippine armed forces would continue to build on the existing close cooperation, particularly in the border areas, in order to eliminate all forms of terrorism.

Najib also said that the Philippine government appreciated the continued cooperation and initiative extended by Malaysia in pursuing peace in Muslim Mindanao.

Najib said the Arroyo government, in particular, valued the concurrence of Malaysia to stop any attempt at promoting violence and separatism among the various Muslim communities in the southern Philippines.

"Consistent with the concept of security and development in the region being pursued by the two countries, Malaysia and the Philippines are committed to assisting each other in the attainment of peace, security and development in the southern Philippines and the border areas," he said.

Responding to a question from reporters later, Reyes said: "Minus the alleged mistreatment (the case of 13-year old girl), the overall treatment (of deportees) has been acceptable and Malaysia has taken appropriate measures to ensure that the appropriate gear and attention are given to Filipinos."

-- BERNAMA

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