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Groups demonstrate in Manila

Leftists and socialists rally in front of Malaysian Embassy and burn poster

PETALING JAYA: Demonstrators gathered in front of the Malaysian Embassy in Manila and burnt a poster of Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak and Philippine President Benigno Aquino.

No employee was hurt in the hour-long demonstration yesterday that started at 10.30am with a heavy Philippine police presence maintaining order, said an embassy official.

The official said the group of less than 100 demonstrators who identified themselves as being members of leftist and socialist non-governmental groups burnt a poster depicting Najib shaking hands with Aquino following the signing of last year's framework peace agreement for the southern Philippines.

A photo of the Malaysian flag, said the official, was in the background of the poster that was burnt.

"The poster also contained some angry words in Tagalog which accused Aquino of betraying the Bangsamoro people in southern Philippines.

"We believe one of the reasons for the demonstration is to show anger towards Aquino in view of the country's scheduled mid-term general election in May," said the official.

The demonstrators left after one hour and the official said the embassy would remain open although staff and family members have



been urged to be extra vigilant.

Meanwhile in **GOPENG**, Rural and Regional Development Minister Datuk Seri Shafie Apdal condemned the protests saying the group could have been instigated or paid to do so to sour the diplomatic ties between Malaysia and the Philippines.

"I hope necessary action will be taken against them as I think this sort of acts (protests) could be due to jealousy," he said after meeting Risda staff at the Rural Transformation Centre.

Wisma Putra has advised Malaysians in the Philippines to exercise extra caution while there.

It said in a statement that the Malaysian Embassy in Manila and the Malaysian Consulate-General in Davao City have been liaising with the relevant authorities to assess the security situation there.

"Both diplomatic missions will remain open unless otherwise notified," it added.



In flames: Protesters burning a poster depicting Najib shaking hands with Aquino during a rally at the Malaysian Embassy in Manila. — AP