

Mayor Celso Lobregat has sought the assistance of Social Welfare Secretary Corazon 'Dinky' Soliman for the estimated 45,000 undocumented Filipino workers in Malaysia who are given only until October 10 to process their papers or face arrest and deportation.

The mayor recently convened a meeting with various agencies following a request from some Malaysian companies to look into the possibility of seeking amnesty in the registration of their foreign workers that include Filipinos. The request came through a letter to the mayor from a Zamboanguena who married a Malaysian managing a palm plantation in that country.

Mayor Lobregat said the DFA, DOLE and OWWA also received similar requests. The DOLE, he said had an initial meeting before he convened the City Hall dialogue. "My meeting was a follow-up (meeting) but I brought it to the attention of Sec. Soliman".

The meeting, held at City Hall was attended by representatives from Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA), Department of Social Welfare and Development Office (DSWD), City Social Welfare and Development Office and other concerned agencies.

During the meeting, the mayor called up Sec. Soliman to inform about the request and to look into the possibility of bringing the matter to the Cabinet or cluster level so that appropriate steps can be undertaken the soonest possible time.

"It is best that this be elevated to the cabinet level or cluster level so that appropriate measures can be taken by all the departments concerned. It cannot be handled locally, this is a country to country issue so it is best to elevate it to the national level", the mayor told City Hall reporters in an interview.

Based on reports, the mayor said over a hundred thousand undocumented foreign workers in Malaysia are affected by the deadline set by the Malaysian government. Of the total number, some 45,000 are Filipinos while the others are Indonesians and other nationalities.

Apparently those affected are mostly palm plantation workers and that Indonesians and Filipinos are the top two nationalities affected by the Malaysian policy.

Based on past statistics, most of the undocumented Filipinos who are deported to the Philippines through Zamboanga City are from Tawi-tawi and Sulu and about 8-12 percent from Zamboanga.

On the other hand, the mayor said, he brought the matter to Sec. Soliman's attention considering that she is familiar with the situation as she was also the head of the DSWD when the Malaysian government also ordered a crackdown against undocumented foreign nationals including Filipinos.

He said it was the time when DSWD Assistant Secretary Parisya Taradji was sent to Malaysia to negotiate for an amnesty for the affected Filipinos.

Celso seeks Soliman's help for 45T OFWs in Malaysia

Monday, 26 September 2011 16:45 -

“There might be a possibility of a repeat of what happened in the past (when thousands of Filipinos were deported to the Philippines through Zamboanga City)”, the mayor added. — Sheila Covarrubias/City Hall PIO