

GMA off to Qatar for 3 days

President Arroyo is leaving for Qatar on Dec. 13 and she is expected to be back on Dec. 16, Malacañang said yesterday.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said Mrs. Arroyo will be accompanied by a lean delegation of labor and trade officials.

Trade Secretary Peter Favila said during her three-day official visit, Mrs. Arroyo will also witness the signing of the Joint Economic Cooperation Agreement that would not only strengthen ties but boost the economies of the two countries.

The agreement would pave the way for deeper cooperative ventures on free trade, customs, labor and other economic sectors, he added.

Labor Secretary Marianito Roque, who is also part of the delegation, said he and Qatar Labor Minister Dr. Sultan bin Hassan Al Dossar signed in Doha two months ago a memorandum of understanding in which the Qatar government and firms would honor job contracts signed by Filipino workers in Manila.

"In other words, there will be no contract substitution or changes when they (Filipino workers) get to Qatar," he said.

— Paolo Romero