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Anwar-Mindanao

MALAYSIA TO STEP UP INVESTMENT IN MINDANAO

By: Zulkefli Salleh

MANILA, Aug 22 (Bernama) -- The southern Philippine island of Mindanao can expect to see a more aggressive inflow of Malaysian investment following the peace settlement between Manila and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF).

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said today he would appeal to Malaysian investors to come to the island and work together, particularly to support tourism in that beautiful part of the Philippines.

"With the hostilities quite resolved, Malaysia is optimistic with the future of the Philippines," he told reporters after a courtesy call on President Fidel Ramos at the Bahay Pangarap (House of Dreams) in the Malacanang Palace.

Anwar conveyed on behalf of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad the appreciation and support of the Malaysian government and people for the peace process. He is making a three-day working visit in conjunction with the Philippine Centennial Revolution Celebrations.

Anwar said he was certain that more Malaysian investments would flow into Mindanao since there had already been some initial work by investors but "in the process they are a bit hesitant because of the unsettled issue."

Ramos and Moro leader Nur Misuari met in Malabang, Mindanao, on Monday to iron out final details of a peace agreement to bring an end to a 26-year-old civil war between Manila and Muslim separatists.

The peace pact, to be sealed on Sept 2, would lead to some measure of Moro autonomy on the island of Roman Catholic Philippines.

Anwar said the peace agreement was a major move for the settlement of hostilities in the Philippines and augured well for the region.

"With peace in place, I expect the whole region to focus their attention to work together in the process of national reconstruction, particularly in areas that have quite been marginalised in the past due to the hostilities," he said.

Anwar said he and Ramos felt that towards that end there was a need to see additional mechanism other than existing financial institutions.

This would include the possibility of reviving the Amanah Bank to enable foreign investors, particularly from Muslim countries, to come and look at the Philippines and also Mindanao.

Anwar, who will be a key speaker at an international conference here tomorrow on Philippine Revolution and Beyond, also conveyed to the president the best wishes and sentiment of the Malaysian government and people on that occasion.

Anwar also presented to Ramos two books written by Filipino national hero Dr Jose Rizal and which have been translated into Bahasa Malaysia, and a compilation of working papers presented at a seminar on Rizal held in Kuala Lumpur early this year.

The books are entitled "Bermaharajalelanya Keserakahan (El-Filibusterismo) and Jangan Sentuh Aku (Nolime Tangere). -- BERNAMA

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