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JCM-Philippines

OFFICIALS BEGIN TALKS FOR MALAYSIA-PHILIPPINES JCM MEETING

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 28 (Bernama) -- Senior officials of Malaysia and the Philippines began a series of meetings here today in the run-up to the 4th ministerial-level joint commission meeting on bilateral cooperation (JCM) on March 1-3.

The last JCM was held in the Philippines in 1996.

The Kuala Lumpur talks kicked off with the 4th joint committee meeting on border cooperation (JCBC) and this will be followed by the 2nd meeting of the joint committee on the assistance for the socio-economic advancement of Muslim Filipinos tomorrow.

Foreign Ministry Secretary-General Datuk Abdul Kadir Mohamad, who is leading the Malaysian delegation at the official-level discussions, said in his opening remarks that the JCBC provided an invaluable opportunity for both countries to make forward movements in several aspects of border cooperation.

Today's meeting is divided into two working group sessions -- one on the border patrol coordinating group and the other on border crossing.

Abdul Kadir said although the JCBC last met almost four years ago, four inter-sessional meetings of the border patrol coordinating group had been held.

"Much was achieved in the deliberations of that coordinating group which has, among others, agreed on a strategy to combat smuggling and piracy activities," he said.

The Dewan Rakyat was recently told that an estimated 100,000 illegal immigrants had been identified in Sabah which neighbours two Asean countries, namely Indonesia and the Philippines.

On the assistance for Muslim Filipinos, Abdul Kadir said the discussions tomorrow would touch on how Malaysia could participate in the economic development in the predominantly Muslim southern Philippines.

The Filipino delegation to the two meetings is led by Department of Foreign Affairs Undersecretary for Policy Lauro Baja Jr.

Abdul Kadir said Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar and Philippine Foreign Affairs Secretary Domingo Siazon would lead their respective teams at the JCM.

Siazon is also expected to call on Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

-- BERNAMA

MAM JK