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PM welcomes relaunch of peace talks

BANGSAMORO DEAL: Peaceful resolution is a historic achievement, says Najib

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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak welcomed the relaunch of the Bangsamoro peace deal here yesterday, saying it would pave the way for a peaceful solution to the decades-long conflict in Mindanao, the Philippines.

"I am pleased that members of the Philippines government's new implementing panel and representatives of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) are meeting here to formally relaunch the implementing phase of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro.

"The peaceful resolution of a decades-long conflict that has cost the lives of tens of thousands is a historic achievement, and Malaysia has been proud to facilitate the negotiations that have contributed to the delivery of greater safety and stability in Mindanao, the Philippines and the region," said Najib in a statement.

Najib said Malaysia would remain committed to the peace process for as long as desired.

"We respect the sovereignty of other countries and consider foreign interference in the domestic affairs of others as wrong. However, when requested by the government of a friend and neighbour, we are happy to provide all possible assistance."

Najib also commended Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte for showing support towards a peaceful resolution to the conflict in the

southern Philippines.
"While certainly there are challenges ahead, I am confident that under President Duterte's leadership, and with Malaysia's commitment in its role as an honest broker, a new era of development and prosperity in the southern Philippines can be achieved."

At the relaunch of the implementation phase of the Mindanao Peace Agreement here yesterday, Najib said the continuation of the peace process was important to Malaysia and the region because of the rising threat of the Islamic State (IS) militant group.

Najib's speech was delivered by Deputy Defence Minister Datuk Seri Mohd Johari Baharom, who also opened the event.

He said peace in Mindanao would be the first step in bringing stability and development to the Southeast Asian region.

"This will help combat the radicalisation of the people," he said, adding that several Malaysian nationals were known to have joined Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) factions that had pledged allegiance to IS.

"ASG is a common threat to the region due to its involvement in kidnap-for-ransom activities.

"There are also links between ASG and other terrorist organisations where there are movements in term of funds and weapons," said Najib.

Najib said the peace process had so far been successful in delivering peace and stability in southern Philippines.

"Peace will allow the region to de-



(From left) Malaysian facilitator for the peace talks **Tengku Datuk Ab Ghaffar Tengku Mohamed**, the Philippines' presidential adviser on the peace process **Jesus Dureza**, Deputy Defence Minister **Datuk Seri Mohd Johari Baharom** and Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) chairman **Al-Haj Murad Ebrahim** at the launch of the implementing phase of the Mindanao Peace Agreements between the Philippine government and MILF in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. Pic by Azhar Ramli

velop its security and economy, which will create an attractive environment for the people to lead a safe and prosperous life," he said.

The government of the Philippines and MILF will discuss the roadmap in the implementation of the peace process between the two parties this weekend.

This is a follow-up on the Declaration of Continuity of the Partnership between the Philippines government and MILF in the Bangsamoro Peace Process signed on May 30 here.

The peace agreement, signed in 1996, underwent several reviews over 17 years.

Despite setbacks, both parties signed the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro in October 2012, which gave new hope to the people of Mindanao.

Duterte has pledged his commitment to implement the agreement after it had failed to pass through during the last congress session.