

Dr M warns against **foreigner influx**

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➤ They can disturb political stability, Filipinos told

MANILA: Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday warned the Philippines against letting in foreigners who could “disturb” the country’s domestic political stability.

“Foreign direct investment should not involve bringing huge numbers of foreigners to live in the country, because that might disturb the political equations in the country,” Mahathir told ABS-CBN television in an interview.

“If huge numbers of any foreigners (come) to live and stay in the country ... you have to do some rethinking as to whether it is good or bad, or the limits that you have to impose on them.”

Mahathir is in the Philippines for the first time since Pakatan Harapan swept to federal power last year.

The premier held talks with President Rodrigo Duterte and addressed a business forum after the television interview.

On territorial disputes in the South China Sea, Mahathir said there should be no impediment to vessels using the strategic waterway, through which

trillions of dollars in global trade pass each year.

“The South China Sea in particular must be open to navigation,” he said.

At their meeting, Mahathir and Duterte hailed a peace process that put leaders of the Philippines’ largest Muslim guerilla group at the helm of a new self-governing area near the mainly Catholic nation’s sea border with Malaysia.

The decades-old rebellion in the Mindanao region claimed 150,000 lives, ushered in violent extremist groups and caused tens of thousands of Filipinos to flee to Malaysia to escape the violence and find work.

Duterte said he thanked Mahathir for Malaysia’s “unrelenting support for development in the south” and playing a key role in the peace process, which included helping monitor a ceasefire and hosting formal negotiations.

Mahathir said he assured Duterte “of Malaysia’s desire to ... address the serious issue of terrorism and violent extremism.” - AFP



Duterte walks with Mahathir as they review a guard of honour during the welcoming ceremony at the Malacanang Palace grounds in Manila yesterday. - **AFPPIX**