

Malaysia's Leadership Evident In The Region, Says Najib
Bernama
October 16, 2012
From R. Ravichandran

MANILA, Oct 16 (Bernama) -- Malaysia's leadership is evident in the region as the country has contributed to building peace and prosperity, said Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

He said the latest effort was the successful brokering of a peace deal between the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), which resulted in the signing yesterday of the historic Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro.

Najib, who was here to witness the signing, said the agreement was the outcome of Malaysia's role as a facilitator since 2001 to open a new era for the Bangsamoro in the southern Philippines, and added that the development had also given a positive impact in the context of relations between Kuala Lumpur and Manila.

He said it was not easy for a country to be a facilitator in a protracted conflict, and Malaysia's achievement had received the commendation of President Benigno Aquino III and the Philippine government.

"If two people are quarrelling, usually they can't sit down together. Two sides embroiled in a conflict can't sit down at a table to begin talking and negotiating ... unless there is a third party to facilitate that. That third party must be somebody credible, not just anybody. It can't be anybody.

"To quote the term used by (President) Aquino, we have succeeded in becoming an honest broker between the Philippine government and the MILF to make the framework agreement signed at Malacanang (Palace) a reality," Najib said at a gathering with the Malaysian community, here, last night.

He said he did not think that Malaysia would have been chosen as a facilitator if the country was not harmonious and successful in various aspects despite being multi-racial.

The prime minister said that as Malaysia was peaceful and enjoyed stability for so long, the people could enjoy the benefits. But we are credible as a nation because we are successful.

"I don't think both sides would have wanted us to be the facilitator if we are a failed state. For example, if Malaysia was saddled in a conflict, it would not be a model of a harmonious country in terms of diversity," he said.

The prime minister said Malaysia was able to manage a complex society and had turned it into an advantage to build a successful nation.

"I think people believe this, not only in Malaysia, but also outside Malaysia. They believe that one day Malaysia will be a fully developed nation. That I think gives us a lot of credibility.

"People know, God willing, those in the Philippines ... (and) outside Malaysia know we are on course to becoming a fully developed nation. Only certain quarters deny this, but the majority knows," he said.

Najib said that with the signing of the agreement, the Philippine government was also keen to get Malaysia to play other roles, such as training its people and developing land schemes like Felda's.

He said the Philippines had a president who aspired to find a peaceful resolution to the conflict and that had enabled the agreement to become a reality.

He said the conflict in the southern Philippines for nearly 40 years had claimed almost 150,000 lives and resulted in destruction of property and backwardness.

"Therefore, the hardship, the suffering of the Bangsamoro was so great, resulting in the Philippine government having to spend lots of money to address the conflict.

"From my observation, which I can recall during my visit to Cotabato (in Mindanao) in 2004, it looked like Malaya in the 50s. (Malaysian Defence Minister) Datuk (Seri Dr Ahmad) Zahid (Hamidi), who went there recently, also shared the same view.

However, he said, the overriding belief was that the protracted conflict in the area could eventually be resolved after common points were reached.

About 150 Malaysians comprising businessmen, students and Malaysian Embassy staff and family members attended the gathering.

-- BERNAMA

Copyright © 2012 BERNAMA

Source: <http://www.bernama.com/bernama/v6/newsindex.php?id=702252>