

MILF Must Remain Faithful to Peace Process despite Current Setback – Najib
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KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 26 (Bernama) -- The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) must remain faithful to the peace process despite the current setback faced, since it is a practical choice to resolve the Bangsamoro issue in the southern Philippines.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said the process thus far, had been very successful in delivering relative peace and stability in southern Philippines.

"Reverting to armed struggle is definitely not an option and bloodshed must be avoided at all cost," he said in a statement after meeting MILF Chairman Murad Ebrahim yesterday.

Najib did not state the venue of the meeting but said it was to discuss the peace process in southern Philippines which Malaysia is facilitating.

"I have reached an understanding with Al-Haj Murad Ebrahim that the MILF should preserve the most significant gain of the peace process, the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB)," he said.

He called on the MILF to remain united particularly at this trying time in order to face uncertainties and challenges.

Najib also said he had reiterated Malaysia's commitment to support the peace process beyond the Presidency of Benigno Aquino, and was ready and willing to work with the new Philippines' President, regardless who would win the election to be held in May this year, on the issue.

"As a statement of Malaysia's commitment, Defence Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Tun Hussein will be accompanying our new batch of observers in the International Monitoring Team (IMT) during the handing over process in Cotabato City, next month," he said.

Najib said Murad on his part had pledged his utmost commitment to sustain peace and its dividends.

"I have encouraged H E Al-Haj Murad Ebrahim to actively reach out to other Moro groups in order to foster Bangsamoro unity and ensure the inclusivity of the current peace process," he said.

"I call upon all groups in Mindanao to reject radicalisation and extremism. As Muslims, we must uphold and implement the wasatiah which brings forth a moderate, just and balanced way of life," he said.

The prime minister said it was also his personal wish to see lasting peace prevails as he had also envisioned the Philippines-MILF peace process as the model for resolving long-standing conflicts.

"This process has not only brought relative peace to southern Philippines but also to the region.

"Should the process finally be completed it would also insulate South East Asia from threats by militant groups," he said.

Najib also expressed confidence that the conflicting parties would remain committed to find lasting peace, and Malaysia would continue to be an honest broker in this process.

The comprehensive peace deal between the government of the Philippines and the MILF, which was brokered by Malaysia, was signed on March 27, 2014.

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