

**MALAYSIA, PHILIPPINES TO EXPLORE FURTHER COOPERATION IN VARIOUS SECTORS – PM ANWAR**

**YAB DATO' SERI ANWAR IBRAHIM**

**NEWS**

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MANILA, March 1 (Bernama) — Malaysia and the Philippines has agreed to explore further cooperation in various sectors as both neighbouring countries seek ways to elevate their bilateral relationship to new heights.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said the bilateral cooperation is multi-sectoral, covering trade and investment, education, health and agriculture, among others.

‘We also discussed areas for further collaboration. New and important sectors such as the halal industry, food security and digital economy are among the key areas that I proposed as potential cooperation,’ he said.

The prime minister said this during a joint press briefing with Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr after a bilateral meeting at the Malacanang Palace today.

Earlier, the special aircraft carrying Anwar and his wife Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail arrived at Villamor Air Base here, to kick-start his two-day official visit to the Philippines.

Both countries, according to Anwar, have also agreed to resume the 8th Joint Commission Meeting to be led by both Foreign Ministers this year at a mutually convenient date.

The prime minister also spoke of further deepening people-to-people ties between Malaysia and the Philippines and continuing cultural exchanges and tourism.

“I acknowledged the role of the Philippines diaspora in Malaysia and their contribution to both of our economies, and as founding members of ASEAN and the Brunei-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines East Asean growth area, the Philippines and Malaysia have Asean-centrality embedded into our regional outlooks,” he said.

On the South China Sea issue, Anwar said he discussed it with President Marcos in which both leaders shared concerns on the matter.

“Due to the complexity of the issue, we should try and engage and take a position at the multilateral level between ASEAN so that we have a comprehensive approach and achieve an amicable solution to this outstanding problem,” he said.

The prime minister also said he expressed his concern about the contentious issue of Myanmar which remained unresolved, adversely affecting Malaysia due to the huge number of its refugees.

He said the number of Myanmar refugees in Malaysia has exceeded 200,000 people.

“The President, in his wisdom, has reiterated the need for the five-point consensus, but I would certainly suggest exploring new areas on how the Myanmar junta can be persuaded to work and collaborate as a team within ASEAN and resolve the outstanding issue which cannot be considered as

purely internal because it is affecting the security and welfare of the region,” he said.

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