

**PEACE EFFORT IN MINDANAO HAS TO SUCCEED – PM ANWAR
YAB DATO' SERI ANWAR IBRAHIM
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MANILA, March 1 (Bernama) — Efforts to attain peace in Mindanao, southern Philippines, have to succeed because their failure could affect not only the Philippines and Malaysia but also the whole region, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said today.

He applauded Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr for making great strides to ensure the peace process in Mindanao would be successful.

“It is our (Malaysia) duty as a good neighbour to support this effort (peace process). We will have to utilise all bilateral and multilateral means to achieve this.

“The peace process has to succeed, because it not only affects the Philippines and Malaysia but also the region,” he said at a joint press briefing after holding a bilateral meeting with Marcos at Malacanang Palace here.

Anwar arrived in Manila today to begin a two-day official visit, his fifth to ASEAN countries after becoming prime minister late last year.

Earlier, Anwar attended an official welcoming ceremony at the Malacanang Palace and inspected a guard of honour mounted by 165 soldiers of the Philippine Armed Forces.

Anwar is accompanied by his wife Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail and several Cabinet members on the visit.

The prime minister said Malaysia remained committed to playing a constructive role in the peace process in Mindanao.

“Malaysia will also continue to offer assistance to the Bangsamoro people, to various capacity-building programmes, including through our Malaysia Technical Cooperation Programme (MTCP),” he said.

According to Anwar, there are immense opportunities to be reaped by both countries should efforts to attain peace in Mindanao succeed.

Meanwhile, Marcos commended the progress made towards achieving sustainable and inclusive peace in Mindanao.

“It is a combination of years and effort and sincerity among all parties which will soon realise the dividends of peace,” he said.

The Philippines, according to him, recognised the great contribution that Malaysia had made to the peace process in southern Philippines.

He hoped the support shown by Malaysia would continue to contribute to the success of the peace process and the establishment of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region.

On the issue of Filipino immigrants in Malaysia, Anwar said he had asked for the Philippines’ assistance and cooperation to expedite the documentation of its nationals so that they could be repatriated to their country in a timely manner.

“I also reaffirmed Malaysia’s readiness to discuss with the Philippines the ways to address the illegal Filipino immigrants (issue) in Malaysia,” he said.

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