

Badawi assures GMA of support for Mindanao peace process



THE PRESIDENT exchanges pleasantries with Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi during their Bilateral Meeting last December 12 at the Imperial Hotel in Tokyo. The President was in Tokyo with other Southeast Asian leaders ifor the Japan-Association of Southeast Asian Nations Commemorative Summit.

TOKYO – Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi today assured President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo of Malaysia's continued support for the government's peace efforts in Mindanao.

Badawi, who succeeded former Malaysian leader Mahathir Mohamad, gave the assurance during the two leaders' bilateral meeting held this morning on the sidelines of the two-day ASEAN-Japan Commemorative Summit.

In an interview, Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye said the President thanked Badawi for Malaysia's role in facilitating the resumption of the formal talks between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

Exploratory talks that could lead to the formal resumption of the peace talks between the two sides would start next month in Kuala Lumpur.

Bunye said Malaysia has prom-

ised to exert all efforts to make sure that the peace talks move forward.

Malaysia, a founding member of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), is well respected by the MILF.

The President, Bunye said, also thanked the Malaysian official for the development projects in Mindanao, particularly the palm oil plantation, a joint venture of Filipino and Malaysian businessmen.

He said the President asked Badawi to allow the Philippines to import palm oil seeds from Malaysia.

If this will push through, it will speed up progress of palm oil development, he added.

According to Bunye, Badawi has also expressed interest in the development of the Brunei Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines—East ASEAN Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA), which the President has been pushing.