



# Murad: It's government to blame

**COTABATO CITY (April 29) --** The chairman of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front has blamed the government for the pull out starting May 10 of the 60-member Malaysian-led International Monitoring Team, as a consequence of the slow progress in the 11-year-old GRP-MILF talks.

"The Philippine government bears the responsibility to comply with its commitment to adhere to the consensus points and agreed Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) draft proposal on ancestral domain. Such move will avert the peace process from falling apart," said MILF chief Al-Haj Murad in an statement posted in their website [www.luwaran.com](http://www.luwaran.com).

Murad was apparently referring to the government and MILF's misunderstandings on how to establish the

[MURAD/p.11]

## UK experts to aid in MILF talks; IMT pull out is final

The United Kingdom said yesterday that the Philippine and British governments agreed that experts in the Northern Ireland peace process will be sent to the Philippines to give assistance and advice to the peace talks between the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the government.

British Foreign Office Minister for Southeast Asia and the Pacific Margaret Patricia Munn and British Ambassador to Manila Peter Beckingham said Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Jesus Dureza agreed on Friday to the sending of British experts who were instrumental in the 10-year old Northern Ireland-UK peace agreement.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita and Foreign Affairs Secretary Alberto Romulo also welcomed the sending of British experts who had talked with Sein Fenn, political arm of the Irish Republican Army.

[UK/p.11]



**FOREIGN DIGNITARIES ---** Attorney Benedicto Bacani of the Institute for Autonomy and Governance (left) stresses a point regarding Mindanao autonomy to Ambassadors Ritta Resch of Finland and Inger Ultvedt of Sweden (right) during a tour in Cotabato City of diplomats from member-states of the European Union to familiarize themselves with the Mindanao peace process.[]

## Malaysia: RP must move to restart peace talks with MILF

**KUALA LUMPUR (AP)-**Stalled peace negotiations between the Philippine government and Muslim guerrillas cannot advance unless Manila stops harping on technical points, a Malaysian official brokering the talks today said.

The Philippine government may have to back off on its insistence that any accord conform with its constitution if it hopes to restart negotiations, said Othman Abdul Razak, the chief Malaysian mediator.

Malaysia's decision to start pulling out cease-fire monitors from the southern Philippines is "meant to send a signal" that Philippine authorities should speed up efforts to sign a formal peace pact with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, Othman said.

[MALAYSIA/p.10]

Supported by:



Institute for  
Autonomy and  
Governance

## GRP CCCH and MILF CCCH joint statement

The Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) Coordinating Committees on the Cessation of Hostilities (CCCH) capped its 41<sup>st</sup> Regular Meeting held at Garden Orchid Hotel, Zamboanga City on February 8, 2008.

In their opening statements, Bgen Reynaldo D. Sealana AFP, Chairman, GRP CCCH and Von Al Haq, Chairman, MILF CCCH, dismissed the circulating rumors that the GRP-MILF peace process had already collapsed due to the perceived impasse on the peace talks. Both Chairmen assured that the negotiations are still ongoing and expressed confidence that the peaceful settlement of the conflict in Mindanao will be achieved soon.

The Joint GRP-MILF CCCH conveyed its appreciation and commendation to the unfaltering commitment and contributions to the peace process of the International Monitoring Team (IMT), now headed by Mgen Datuk Mat Yasin Bin Mat Daud of Malaysian, and its member-contingents from Brunei, Libya and Japan.

For his part, Mgen Yasin cited the continuing high level of commitment, goodwill, spirit of harmony and friendship of the Joint CCCH in pursuing the ceasefire and the peace process. He appealed for everybody to make peace and prosperity not only a matter of discussion but a normal part of life, particularly in Mindanao, in order to ensure and sustain national and regional stability.

[GRP /p.9]

## COMMENT: Can we ever learn?

(First of two parts)

GENERAL SANTOS CITY (MindaNews/10 April) – Is the Philippines destined to be in eternal crisis? The Moro rebellion and the communist insurgency have defied five presidents – two of them longest-reigning. Multi-level corruption has defied solution. And they will most likely continue defying presidents after 2010.

### Flashback

From President Manuel A. Roxas to President Diosdado P. Macapagal (1946-1965) were 20 years of political and economic struggles for leadership in Southeast Asia as an independent country. Unfortunately, Filipino leaders ignored the warning of Sen. Lorenzo Tañada of moral decadence alarmingly threatening Philippine society by 1949.

Ironically, the political and economic elite must have seen the decay except where it hurt the fledgling republic most – in themselves, they, in whose leadership the country would rise or fall. In all the elections during the 20-year span, all presidents lost in their reelection bids with corruption as among the big issues, if not the main.

President Ferdinand E. Marcos expertly used corruption to win a second term in 1969. His 20-year rule, 14 years under martial law, saw the worst moral, political and economic corruption in Philippine history. If in the 20 years before Marcos, the Philippines had made slow progress despite the corruption, in the 20 years of Marcos mired in corruption it retrogressed. For a bonus, Marcos sired the Moro and Communist rebellions.

In the twelve years of the Corazon C. Aquino-Fidel V. Ramos presidencies – January 25, 1986-June 30, 1998 – the country regained vigor while corruption, like cancer, was just in remission. Even then, complete cure looked wistful. When Ramos stepped down, both the Moro and Communist rebels were negotiating with the government.

Then came the abbreviated [June 30, 1998-January 20, 2001] Joseph Estrada presidency and that of his immediate successor, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, to end on June 30, 2010. Corruption spread fast plunging the country into crisis after crisis. Despite Arroyo's *Glorific* claim of a booming economy, the next president will most likely inherit the crisis. Peace negotiation with the Communists is in limbo; that with the Moros is in impasse.

What has been wrong? Multi-level corruption at the root of crisis after crisis and four decades of Moro and Communist unrest have dropped the Philippines to the tail-end of the Southeast Asian nations it was leading politically and economically until the early 1960s.

### The Matter

The matter boils down to one simple question: *Can we ever learn?*

Learn what? Learn to see and correct our mistakes;

[COMMENT /p.7]

### EDITORIAL BOARD

**BGen Rey Sealana AFP**  
Chief Executive Officer

**Toks Ebrahim**  
Chief Editor

**Capt Carlos T Sol Jr PA**  
**Rashid Ladiasan**  
Associate Editors

Editors: **LTC Joselito R Tocaldo PA**  
**Geraldine So**  
**Josan Pacaldo**

**Rodolfo C. Garcia**  
**Mohagher Iqbal**  
Counselors

#### Technical Staff:

<b>Danny Pillo</b>	<b>Bobette Dimaukom</b>
<b>Philip Villamar</b>	<b>Sammy Usop</b>
<b>Daniel Villasar</b>	<b>Toks Upam</b>
<b>Voi Flauta</b>	<b>Jonnell Develos</b>
<b>Ricahard Bedua</b>	<b>Dong Gag-uman</b>
<b>Roniie Veñarta</b>	<b>Esmael Lucas</b>

The publication of this newsletter is made possible through the technical and financial assistance provided by the Institute for Autonomy and Governance and the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung. The IAG is at the Alumni Center, Notre Dame University, Cotabato City and the KAS is at ALPAP 1 Building, 140 Leviste Street, Salcedo Village, Makati City.

## US participation in peace negotiations proposed

**In the event Malaysia pulls out of International Monitoring Team**

If Malaysia really pulls its contingent out of the International Monitoring Team (IMT) that watches the enforcement of the 2003 ceasefire agreement between the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), this development would open the door for participation of the United States in the Mindanao peace process, former Ambassador to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Roy V. Señeres said the other day.

Señeres, a Mindanaoan and former National Labor Relations Commission (NLRC) chairman, told the Manila Bulletin that he prefers seeing the US helping out in the efforts to attain peace in Southern Philippines.

"With its influence and power, no one in the Philippines would dare go against the US. These influence and power can be harnessed in a positive way for the attainment of peace through major US participation in the Mindanao peace process," he said.

Señeres said the US can be a truly neutral force in the negotiation, and at the same time it can use its immense resources and clout to help see to it that any final peace agreement the Philippine government and the MILF signs can be implemented fully.

"Personally, I would even welcome an American base in Mindanao," Señeres said.

Reached through a mobile phone call, MILF Vice Chairman for Political Affairs Ghazali Jaafar said Malaysia, since last year, has already bared its plans to pull out of IMT due to the slow progress in the talks that started in January 1997.

"The Malaysian government has made this clear even last year if the Mindanao peace process will not show any significant progress," Jaafar said.

Jaafar said the MILF welcomes the US assistance through its peace and economic projects in Mindanao, but he declined to comment on the proposed US active participation in the peace process.

"There is no formal proposal on this, besides any decision must be done in conjunction with facilitator Malaysia and the Philippine government," the MILF official said.

Malaysia leads the IMT that also has Libya, Brunei, Japan and Canada as members.

Former Maguindanao congressman Michael Mastura was also quoted in a news report about the Malaysian plans to quit the IMT.

Mastura, a member of the MILF peace panel headed by Mohagher Iqbal, blamed the government for the delay

[US/p.8]

## Peace talks still possible even without 3rd party

The government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) may still talk peace even without a third party negotiator and despite Malaysia's withdrawal of its ceasefire monitoring team next month, Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro said on Wednesday.

"I think without a third party, we can talk one-on-one as Filipinos. We are all Filipinos, we should talk peace even without help from other countries," Teodoro said in an interview in Tagaytay where he attended a conference of Calabarzon disaster officials.

Teodoro said both sides should discuss issues and concerns as Filipinos with or without international observers.

He said the peace talks may even be held in the Philippines "within the legal constitutional bounds."

The tour of duty of the Malaysian-led international monitoring team (IMT) will end on Aug. 30. There are reports that Malaysian ceasefire monitors will not extend their stay after August. Peace monitors include contingents from Brunei, Libya, Canada, and Japan. Brunei has indicated that it might also pull out of the IMT if Malaysia does so.

But Armed Forces chief Gen. Hermogenes Esperon Jr. assuaged fears that violence would escalate in the event of Malaysia's pullout.

He said feedback from his commanders showed that people in conflict areas "now have greater preference for peace rather than for violence."

Meanwhile, a ranking military official said the government's and MILF's ceasefire panels are capable of keeping the truce even without help from the IMT.

Brig. Gen. Reynaldo Sealana, head of the Coordinating Committee on the Cessation on Hostility or CCCH, said the presence of truce monitors is advantageous although the situation will remain manageable even if they pack up.

"We can handle the situation if they (MILF) will remain sincere," Sealana said. "However, it will be better if there is a third party or neutral group in the middle so that we can synchronize our actions," Sealana explained in a phone interview.

"There are still four months to go before the tenure of the fourth batch of the IMT will expire and many positive things in the peace negotiation will happen," he said.

He stressed that the government and the MILF will request for an extension of the tour of duty of the current IMT, which is the fifth batch.

"It is very important that there will be a mediator," he said, citing the almost zero record of violations in five years of the ceasefire implementation. He said the only recorded

[PEACE/p.8]

## GMA to ask bishops, ulama to help resolve government, MILF peace talks

DAVAO CITY – President Arroyo is set to meet today with the Bishop-Ulama Conference (BUC) to seek its help in reviving the long-stalled peace talks with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

“The President will meet with the bishops and the ulama to discuss the peace negotiation with the MILF,” National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales told The STAR.

The President is expected to arrive here this morning and proceed to the Marco Polo Hotel for the 11 a.m. meeting with the BUC, led by Davao Archbishop Fernando Capalla and United Church of Christ in the Philippines Bishop Hilario Gomez.

The BUC is an inter-faith dialogue group among Catholic and protestant bishops and Muslim Ulama and Ustadz.

“The President shall be asking for their help in addressing the problems in the peace talks,” Gonzales said.

Several issues, particularly on ancestral domain, have been keeping the peace negotiations between the government and the MILF on hold since 2001.

Another contentious issue is the choice of areas that the MILF wants to control through its proposed Bangsamoro Juridical Entity.

Prospects for the resumption of the talks dimmed further following Malaysia’s decision to pull out its 60-man contingent in the International Monitoring Team (IMT) beginning May 10. Brunei Darussalam has also reportedly signified its intention to withdraw its truce monitoring team.

BUC’s meeting with the President coincides with the group’s 34th general assembly here.

Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Jesus Dureza, on the other hand, debunked the MILF’s allegations that the government is delaying the peace process.

“While government is committed to push the peace process forward, it is not delaying it but doing due diligence in completing the government’s final draft of the ancestral domain agreement to ensure that it is implementable and defensible from attacks of unconstitutionality,” Dureza said.

“While we understand the apparent impatience of some sectors, the government cannot treat these pending issues in a cavalier manner or with undue haste,” Dureza added.

Dureza explained that the government panel, led by retired Lt. Gen. Rodolfo Garcia, is working hard for an acceptable formula to resolve the ancestral domain issue.

[GMA/p.8]

## Tokyo JICA officials meet IMT, CCCH

Officials of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) from its headquarters in Tokyo met in Cotabato City with the Malaysian-led International Monitoring Team (IMT) and Joint Coordinating Committee on the Cessation of Hostilities (CCCH) of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP). The meeting was part of the mission of JICA Tokyo of monitoring its ongoing projects in support of the GRP – MILF peace process, appraising updates on Mindanao situation particularly on peace and security, and acquiring information and feedback for future cooperation.

Hiroyuki Kawamoto, Senior Program Officer for Urban and Regional Development / Peace Building, led the group that includes Eri Saito, Senior Advisor on Peace Building, and Hideo Noda, Senior Country Officer for Southeast Asia Division II & III.

JICA earmarked an initial funding of more than three million dollars to bankroll a two-year study for the socio-economic reconstruction and development of the conflict affected areas of Mindanao (SERD-CAAM). This project which is in support of the GRP-MILF peace involves data banking, in-depth needs analysis, quick impact projects and on-the-spot assistance, and socio-economic development plan.

MGen Datuk Mat Yasin Bin Mat Daud, Head of Mission of IMT, said as part of his briefing “the ceasefire between the government and MILF is holding strongly and the peace situation in his area of responsibility has been improving tremendously.” He even said that Japanese assistance for peace and security is moving on the right path.

IMT primarily monitors the implementation of the ceasefire and socio-economic aspects of the GRP-MILF peace process in accordance with the GRP-MILF Agreement on Peace of 2001.

Gen Yasin stressed that the commitment of both the GRP and MILF, intensified advocacy and dialogue, improving appreciation of peace and care for life, realization of the gains of peace process down to the community level, and active participation of the various stakeholders have all contributed in molding a very conducive environment for peace, security and prosperity in Mindanao.

In response to the question “is peace has been apparently installed in Mindanao,” the Head of Mission said that to a large degree, peace has been installed due to the strong ceasefire, and fast-pacing

[TOKYO/p.6]

## MNLF praises release of Nur Misuari, but with caution

COTABATO CITY, Philippines (Mindanao Examiner / Apr. 25, 2008) – Former Muslim separatist rebel group Moro National Liberation Front has praised Manila on Friday for allowing its deposed leader Nur Misuari to post bail for his temporary liberty, but cautioned the Libyan firebrand against dividing the MNLF.

The Department of Justice said a court granted Misuari temporary freedom.

Misuari is facing rebellion charges after his forces tried, but failed to overrun a major military base in the southern Sulu province and another group held hostage over 100 people in Zamboanga City in 2001 in an attempt to stop the elections in the Muslim autonomous region where he was then the governor.

Misuari then escaped by boat to Malaysia, where he had been arrested and deported to the Philippines. He is now under house arrest and facing rebellion charges in Manila.

“We welcome the news of his release. And we hope this will bring unity and peace to the people,” Muslimin Sema, the new MNLF chieftain, told the Mindanao Examiner newspaper.

Misuari previously accused Sema’s group of removing him as chairman of the MNLF. His followers in Sulu said Misuari never recognized Sema as the new chieftain of the MNLF.

“Sema expects resistance to his leadership only by those whom he called as having different direction in the pursuit of the MNLF’s goals. He stressed that the Front is not fractured and that reorganization is in the offing,” Abdullah Cusain, Sema’s spokesman, said.

A former rebel leader, Sema, now the mayor of Cotabato City in Mindanao Island, has been elected earlier this month by the MNLF Central Committee as its new chieftain. It was the second time in nearly a decade that Misuari, who founded the MNLF, was removed by his own commanders.

In 2000, Misuari was also ousted by his Foreign Affairs chief Parouk Hussin, who along with Sema and other senior leaders, made up the so-called Council of 15. Sema’s group previously appointed Misuari as chairman emeritus, but he rejected the position.

The Council of 15 accused Misuari of being incompetent as governor of the Muslim autonomous region in Mindanao.

Misuari signed a peace deal with Manila in September 1996 ending decades of bloody war. After the peace agreement was signed, Misuari became the governor of the Muslim autonomous region. But despite the peace accord, there was a widespread disillusionment with the

[MNLF/p.6]

## MILF may launch BLMI soon sans gov’t volunteered seed money

The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) through its peace panel is seriously studying the possibility of formally launching the Bangsamoro Leadership and Management Institute (BLMI), even without the government fulfilling its voluntary offer to spare few millions of pesos as seed money to jumpstart the operation. Citing lack of funds, the government has not yet fulfilled its promise to provide the BLMI the initial seed money to start operation, as part of the confidence-building in the ongoing GRP-MILF Peace Talks.

On the part of the MILF, it is not used – and it is a taboo – to seek favor from the government, which technically is still an “enemy” because the Moro Problem is still not solved even after more than a decade of talking across the negotiating table.

The BLMI was created by the Philippine government and MILF peace negotiators during their 10th exploratory talks in Guoman, Port Dickson, Selangor, on February 6-7, 2006.

Jun Mantawil, head of the MILF Peace Panel Secretariat, told *Luwaran* that the decision to operationalize the BLMI is based on many considerations, which he enumerated as follows:

1. The immediate operationalization of the BLMI, as a capacity-building center for emerging leaders and professionals from the Bangsamoro people, is long overdue;
2. To demonstrate that the MILF really mean business in the negotiation by implementing its part of the deal such as the decision to create and operationalize the BLMI;
3. To demonstrate once again that the MILF’ self-reliance is the correct policy that would lead it to greater heights and achievements in the future; and
4. To arrest the worsening quality of leadership from among the Bangsamoro people, who, with the exception of a few, are fast reverting to the old, abusive, and discredited type of leadership which is feudal, elite-centered. The people are left behind, thereby creating a wide gap between the so-called leaders and the people.

He also disclosed that during the launching, some well-meaning personalities in the academe, professionals, women, youths, business community, international non-government organizations, including funding institutions such as the World Bank, the European Union and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), etc.

The International Monitoring Team (IMT) and member states representatives will also be requested to grace the occasion.

The MILF will also invite officials from the GRP Peace Panel or from the Office of the Presidential Assistant on

[MILF/p.6]

**MILF** . . . from page 5

the Peace Process (OPAPP).

However, Mantawil, when asked to pinpoint the date of the BLMI's launching, said, "We are in the final stage of planning. It would not be very long." (www.luwaran.com)

**MNLF** . . . from page 5

weak autonomy they were granted.

Under the peace agreement, Manila would have to provide a mini-Marshall Plan to spur economic development in Muslim areas in the south and livelihood and housing assistance to tens of thousands of former rebels to uplift their poor living standards.

The 58-year old Sema has criticized Misuari for dragging the MNLF into disarray. "Misuari wanted to bring down the MNLF with him and that's why we are all working hard to unify the MNLF and bring peace and development in Mindanao," he said.

Government peace adviser Jesus Dureza also welcomed Misuari's temporary freedom. "We welcome the decision of the Makati Regional Trial Court allowing Chairman Nur Misuari to post bail. We hope that with his temporary liberty, Chairman Nur will continue to be an important player in the Mindanao peace process," Dureza said.

But Misuari's fall had severely affected the MNLF which is now heavily divided and rift among its leaders is becoming more apparent. Misuari also ran twice for governor in Sulu province even while under detention, but lost.

Misuari also supported Arroyo's election bid and her allies in the Senate and Congress in 2004 in exchange for promises that he would be pardoned and freed.

Sema has vowed to "put into track the peace process with the government and make good the relations between the MNLF and government and convert it as vanguard of our people against exploitation and oppression and also as vanguard for good governance, transparency and accountability".

Sema said he intends to work further with local and international non-government organizations to bring peace and development in Muslim areas in Mindanao.

Sources close to Misuari earlier said that he may be freed this year on condition that he will go to exile in Libya, which had previously supported the MNLF struggle for independence in the Philippines.

It was unknown whether Tripoli was aware or part of the plan, but Seif al Islam, the son of the Libyan strongman Muammar al-Gaddafi and former Libyan ambassador to Manila, Salem Adam, were in Manila last year and met with government and MNLF leaders and discussed about Misuari's case. (Mindanao Examiner)

**Child without legs gets wheelchair from kind hearts**

COTABATO CITY (April 26) — Born without legs, life has never been as easy for a 14-year-old Moro boy until the wheelchair from Japan came.

Parents of Haron Guaman, whose two arms also have deformities, can now freely move him around their yard, courtesy of a wheelchair donated to him by the Rotary Club of Cotabato.

Businessman Adin Yu, president of the Rotary Club of Cotabato, said the wheelchair came all the way from a benefactor from Japan.

Yu said the wheelchair was just one of several units they have donated to hospitals, paraplegic individuals and a home for the aged here.

Yu said he and some of his companions learned of Guaman's plight when they saw him being moved in a busy spot in the city using a pedaled cab, locally known as "trisikad," by his father, Akmad.

Led by Yu, members of the Rotary here awarded Haron with a wheelchair in an emotion-filled ceremony at a local restaurant, where the club also tendered for him a simple banquet.

"He's got that overwhelming fighting spirit to survive and move around despite his condition. He had long wished for a wheelchair but we could not afford to buy one for him," Guaman's father said in the Moro vernacular.

Guaman was so overwhelmed by the event that he just kept smiling at everyone without saying a word until the left home.

"It's so nice to see someone get happy as a consequence of our humanitarian projects. I understand the situation and the uncomfortable life this child must have been living through because I'm a mother too," said Erlinda Zurita, the incoming president of the Rotary Club here.

The Rotary club here has various peace-building activities, some complementing the Southern peace process. []

**TOKYO** . . . from page 4

and increasing assistance for the humanitarian, rehabilitation and development programs for the conflict affected and downtrodden communities.

However, he said without further explaining that if the peace treaty between the GRP and MILF will not be signed then the whole scenario may change totally.

Yasin said that the JICA assistance focused on potable water system, community health centers, schools improvement and community multi-purpose centers are the right things to do now. He suggested to JICA to possibly provide assistance on peace corps programs in support of the peace building campaign of the GRP - MILF peace process. (www.luwaran.com)

**COMMENT . . .** from page 2

learn from the experience of other nations and their examples.

The Filipinos are as human as the other Asians, the Americans, the Europeans, the Australians and the Africans and are as prone to make mistakes as they. But there's a big difference between them and us — especially our leaders. In our pride, we either fail or refuse to see and emulate models and to take lessons from bad examples.

Like all free nations, we have democratic system and institutions to promote the common weal. But instead of admitting their mistakes our leaders blame those very system and institutions for our national woes. To rectify their mistakes, our erring leaders would rather change the system and institutions to suit their interests than change their ways.

That in a nutshell is **the** matter with us, Filipinos.

**Corruption**

Corruption is basically *perversion* of moral, political, social and economic values. What we see as corruption in terms of multi-billion peso government funds stolen, cheated or lost in many other devious ways, we condemn. But as long as the perversion remains, multi-level corruption will stay in us, with us and around us. The remedy starts in us, especially our leaders.

Let's take a look outside our windows. The following cases should make us wince and think.

**Eliot Laurence Spitzer**, 48, elected by a landslide as governor of New York, resigned last March 17 less than 48 hours after *The New York Times* had reported his involvement as a client in a "high-end [for VIPs] prostitution ring" — the subject of a federal criminal investigation.

Part of his apology reads:

*"From those to whom much is given, much is expected. I have been given much: love of my family, the faith and trust of the people of New York and the chance to lead this state. I am deeply sorry that I did not live up to what was expected of me.*

*"Over the course of my public life, I have insisted — I believe correctly — that people regardless of their position or power take responsibility for their conduct. I can and will ask no less of myself. For this reason, I am resigning from the office of governor."*

His remorse, apology and resignation speak much of Spitzer, the person and governor. His case shows how democratic institutions work for public good. His involvement in prostitution was incidental to the initial investigation of a suspicious movement of his bank deposits — a case of probable money laundering.

Four institutions cooperated. The *bank* reported its suspicion to the *Treasury Department* which endorsed it to the *Justice Department*. Federal prosecutors and the *Federal*

*Bureau of Investigation* conducted "intense, intrusive and aggressive" investigation with authority from the *Federal Court* — tapping his phone calls, tailing him, and examining his financial records.

Despite his resignation, Spitzer has no assurance he could avoid facing criminal charges.

**Bertie Ahern** [Patrick Bartholomew], 56, despite an 11-year brilliant performance at the helm, announced his decision to resign as prime minister of Ireland and head of his political party on May 6, 2008 because "a government tribunal continues to investigate whether he received improper cash payments from businessmen in the mid-1990s" (*washingtonpost.com*, April 3).

Ahern denied the allegation involving his bank deposits amounting to hundreds of thousands of dollars. But he did not like the "focus on his finances" to be "a drain on his administration" and he stressed that the government must "not be constantly deflected by the minutiae of my life, my lifestyle and my finances".

While his position was speculated to be growing untenable, his resignation was a surprise. His lifestyle is well known in Dublin. "Bertie lives in an ordinary suburban house and goes to the local pub, and he was never seen as someone who was making much money in politics," wrote Michael Gallagher, a political science professor at Trinity College Dublin.

What's common in the two examples? Suspicion of wrongdoing merits investigation in New York and in Ireland. The highest officials — heads of government — are not immune from investigation and government agencies concerned do their job without deference. Spitzer and Ahern are sensitive towards the highest interest of their office — not their own.

**Diane M. Gordon**, 58, a four-term state assemblywoman representing Brooklyn in East New York — winning 90 percent of the vote in the 2006 election — was convicted of bribery last Tuesday, April 8 (*The New York Times*, April 9). She will be sentenced next month. Besides losing her seat, she faces up to 10 years in prison.

Ironically, Gordon is paying dearly for bribery that had failed to bear fruit. She offered to help a developer acquire a parcel of city-owned land in her district if he would build her a house for free as part of the project — a gated community. The house, according to the developer, would cost about \$500,000.

But the plan was discovered. The developer cooperated with the investigators and prosecutors in entrapping Gordon with hidden tapes and cameras.

Reports the *Times*: "The gated community ... was never built, though Ms. Gordon did have a pair of doors worth \$600 installed in her office [by the developer]. And the

**COMMENT . . . from page 7**

developer, Ranjan Batheja, never acquired the city-owned parcel."

**In Contrast**

Gordon's caper – amateurish though it looks – is not unlike the demand of members of a city council in a Southwestern Mindanao city for lots in exchange for their approval of subdivision plans. The only difference: Here it's not bribery. Or, if it is, city councillors enjoy immunity.

The charges against Spitzer and Ahern pale in comparison with charges against Philippine top government officials. But in the U.S. and in Ireland, the governments "aggressively investigate allegations of wrongdoing of public officials" – their heads not exempted.

Our government is tolerant and permissive. Our President has immunity deferentially extended to members of the First Family. Under our patronage system, favored officials of the President, from the Palace down to the barangay, exude privilege as protected species.

We breed, not eradicate, corruption. *(To Be Continued)*  
 ("Comment" is Mr. Patricio P. Diaz' column for MindaViews, the opinion section of MindaNews. Mr. Diaz is the recipient of a "Lifetime Achievement Award" from the Titus Brandsma for his "commitment to education and public information to Mindanawons as Journalist, Educator and Peace Advocate." You may e-mail your comments to [patpdiaz@mindaNews.com](mailto:patpdiaz@mindaNews.com) This e-mail address is being protected from spam bots, you need JavaScript enabled to view it).

**GMA . . . from page 4**

"If there is any sector most interested to resolve these problems, it is the government," Dureza said.

Dureza also lashed out at critics who complained of delays in the peace process.

"Let no one, whether foreign or domestic, publicly posture as if they are more interested than us in a peaceful settlement with our rebels," he added.

"We appreciate the help of the Malaysians in our peace process and we accept and respect their latest decision. We hope they would continue to support our peace and development efforts," Dureza pointed out.

**Blame game**

In Cotabato City, MILF chairman Al-Haj Murad said the government is to blame for Malaysia's decision to withdraw its ceasefire monitoring team.

"The Philippine government bears the responsibility to comply with its commitment to adhere to the consensus points and agreed Memorandum of Agreement draft proposal on ancestral domain," Murad said in a statement posted on the group's website [www.luwaran.com](http://www.luwaran.com).

"Such move will avert the peace process from falling apart," Murad said.

Peace talks between the government and the MILF started on Jan. 7, 1997, but went full blast only in 2003

**US . . . from page 3**

of the talks.

Another Mindanaoan, Major Taharuddin Ampatuan of the military, also made the suggestion a few months back for the US to participate in a key role in the peace process.

Ampatuan is of the sentiments that only the US has the clout and power to make peace realizable in war-torn Mindanao.

Señeres said the Sabah issue and the claim of the heirs of Sultan Jamalul Kiram over the oil-rich island and the fact the Philippines has not renounced this claim "is a burden to Malaysia, the Philippines and the MILF" that hangs like the Sword of Damocles over the talks.

"I believe the issue over Sabah has a bearing on the outcome of the Mindanao peace process. But with the United States coming in to play a key role in the negotiation, I am confident the search for a just, comprehensive and lasting peace can take a dramatic turn," said Señeres.

The former ambassador to the UAE said Filipinos, by and large, have no quarrel with the US, which he added is also true with Muslim Filipinos.

"So what is holding the US from the Mindanao peace process? It is about time they come in," said Señeres.

It could be recalled that US Ambassador Kristie Kenney visited the MILF's peace panel secretariat headquarters in Camp Darapanan, Sultan Kudarat, in Shariff Kabunsuan province and met with Murad and other topranking MILF leaders.

The Kenney-Murad meeting marked the first time an American official of an ambassadorial level had talks with MILF leaders.

During the Camp Darapanan meeting, Kenney reiterated US support for the Mindanao peace process and her government's continuing assistance in Mindanao to advance the peace process. (By EDD K. USMAN, manila bulletin, April 24)

**PEACE . . . from page 3**

ceasefire violation took place in Sibuco, Zamboanga del Norte.

Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak recently said Malaysia's involvement in the truce monitoring in Mindanao "might be extended but not indefinitely." (By James Mananghaya And Roel Pareño Friday, April 25, 2008 ([www.philstar.com](http://www.philstar.com)))

with the help of Malaysia as mediator. The MILF is opposed to resolving the territory issue through a plebiscite.

"The issue is the very sincerity and true intention of the government to pursue the peace talks," Murad said.

Murad said he has tasked the MILF's central committee to come out with a summary of events that led to Malaysia's decision to pull out its contingent. – (By Edith Regalado

Wednesday, April 30, 2008)

**GRP . . . from page 2**

The Guest of Honor and Speaker, LtGen Alexander B Yano, AFP, Commanding General of the Philippine Army, similarly gave credence to the crucial roles of the Committees and IMT in sustaining peace which is vital to the success of the peace negotiations. He gave assurances that the AFP is fully committed to the seeds of peace in resolving the decades-old conflict in Mindanao. He emphasized that peace is synonymous with development and should be the concern of everyone.

The two Committees vowed to further strengthen collaboration with each other and all the stakeholders, particularly the local government units, in order to significantly complement the forgoing of a comprehensive solution to the Bangsamoro problem.

Both CCCHs gave assurances to sustain prompt coordination and actions to prevent proactive situations and unnecessary confrontations, especially between their forces, which can adversely affect the peace process. They agreed to conduct further dialogues and peace advocacy initiatives in promoting confidence-building and goodwill for the peace process between and among the stakeholders, including the international community.

Both Committees viewed with concern recent incidents which resulted in the arrest, death and destruction of properties of their members and civilians. They agreed to take immediate action on the matters by conducting joint fact-finding inquiries in order to come up with mutually acceptable courses of action through, among others, consultations and coordination with concerned authorities.

The two Committees agreed to maximize coordination and information drives on the conduct of the RP-US Balikatan 2008 Exercises in line with the guidelines and principles of the GRP-MILF peace panel.

The two Committees will elevate/refer to the Peace Panel the proposal to create Local Monitoring Teams (LMTs) for the provinces of Sulu, Tawi-Tawi and Palawan which are now included in the expanded area of responsibility of the IMT.

The Joint GRP-MILF CCCH agree to hold a special meeting with the IMT and GRP-MILF Ad Hoc Joint Action Group (AHJAG), Bangsamoro Development Agency and its Technical Working Group to draft the administrative and operational guidelines for the establishment of Areas of Temporary Stay (ATS) which shall be submitted to the GRP-MILF Peace Negotiating Panels for its approval.

The 42<sup>nd</sup> Joint GRP-MILF CCCH Meeting and 21<sup>st</sup> Tripartite Meeting with the IMT is tentative scheduled to be conducted in March, 2008 in Davao City.

Done on the 9<sup>th</sup> Day of February 2008, Zamboanga City.

Signed by:

BGEN REYNALDO D SEALANA  
Chairman, GRP CCCH

VON AL HAQ  
Chairman, MILF CCCH

Attested by:

DIR RAMON MARTINEZ  
Member

ALIBABA ABDULLAH  
Member

COL GILBERT JOSE ROA  
Member

ABU SALIHA MACACUNA  
Member

**PALACE . . . from page 12**

of the Malaysian contingent from the International Monitoring Team (IMT) will not trigger renewed fighting between the government and the MILF.

Ermita said the five-year-old peace negotiations between the government and the MILF have matured enough that mechanisms are being implemented with the help of the international community to discourage another armed confrontation.

"Our talks have progressed and matured relatively smoothly that there is a high level of trust and confidence between both sides," Ermita said.

Ermita said Presidential Adviser for the Peace Process Secretary Jesus Dureza and chief government negotiator Undersecretary Rodolfo Garcia have been holding backchannel talks with their counterparts from Brunei and Malaysia, the two countries that earlier expressed intentions to reduce their presence in the IMT.

Dureza, for his part, took exception to allegations blaming the government for the slow pace of peace negotiations which resulted in the withdrawal of the Malaysians from the IMT.

"Let no one, whether foreign or domestic elements, publicly posture as if they are more interested than us in a peaceful settlement with our rebels," Dureza said in a statement.

"We are doing our level best. Of course with utmost due diligence. We appreciate the help of Malaysians in our peace process and we respect and accept their latest decision," he said.

Dureza said the government remains committed to push the peace process forward notwithstanding the imminent withdrawal of Malaysia from the IMT.

The bulk of the IMT, which is keeping tabs on the ceasefire between the government and the MILF, is composed of military personnel from Malaysia and Brunei.

Brunei also announced plans to follow Malaysia in withdrawing from the IMT.

Ermita, however, said Dureza and Garcia will make representations with the two countries to convince them to stay longer until after the conclusion of the peace talks.

Ermita earlier pointed out the shaky ceasefire agreement signed on July 19, 2003 with the MILF must be monitored by the IMT to pave the way for formal peace talks.

Malaysian-brokered talks between the Philippine government and the MILF hit a snag in December when rebel negotiators walked away from a meeting after disputing proposals by Manila, including the extent of territory that would fall under Muslim control. - (By Paolo Romero Monday, April 28, 2008, Edith Regalado)

COL ARIEL BERNARDO  
Member

TOKSEBRAHIM  
Member

PSSUPT ROGELIO NUNEZA  
Member

ABBASSALUNG  
Member

COL ROBERTO ALMADIN  
Member

SALMAN JAWARI  
Member

RSP MARANAO DANGANAN  
Member

**MALAYSIA** . . . from page 1

"The trouble is that things are not moving in the talks," Othman told The Associated Press. "The ball is in the (Philippine government's) court, but they have been sitting on it."

Malaysia announced last week it will soon withdraw its truce monitors who make up the majority of a 60-person international contingent. The monitors are credited with preventing major fighting in the Philippines' southern Mindanao region and there are fears their withdrawal could threaten the cease-fire.

The move comes after the Malaysia-brokered peace talks floundered in December when the rebels' negotiators walked away from a meeting to protest Manila's position that any accord should conform with the Philippine constitution.

The MILF, which the Philippine military says has 11,000 fighters, is the largest Muslim group battling for self-rule in the southern Philippines.

Othman said Manila's insistence on the constitutional issue was "a constraint."

"It really boils down to the political will of the government," he said. "If the government wants the talks to progress, it can do it. It can think creatively. But if it wants to stick to the constitution, things will not move."

One reason the rebels are said to oppose Manila's stance on the constitutional issue is that it would require any accord reached in the talks to be put to a national referendum. The rebels want any deal to stand on its own.

Othman stressed that Malaysia has no plans to stop mediating the negotiations, but added that "we may have to decide on many things" if the talks remain deadlocked for too long. He declined to elaborate. (Associated Press)

**HEAD** . . . from page 12

island of Mindanao," Daud said.

Sema, said Cusain, has been getting words of support from various sectors, with confident the new MNLF chieftain "will eventually win the recognition and support of the influential Organization of the Islamic Conference, a group where Malaysia, Brunei and Libya are active members."

As this developed, Undersecretary Nabil Tan of the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP), expressed hope the new leadership row in the MNLF, which has fallen into at least four

**OIC** . . . from page 12

resumption.

President Arroyo's peace process adviser, Secretary Jesus Dureza, denied that the GRP is causing the talks' delay, saying it is "doing due diligence in completing the government's final draft of the ancestral domain agreement to ensure that it is implementable and defensible from attacks of unconstitutionality."

Dureza said the GRP cannot regard the ancestral domain issues "in a cavalier manner or undue haste."

Misuari, former governor of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) from September 1996 to November 2001, had earlier credited Ihsanuglo, Saudi King Abdulla Bin Abdul Aziz, and Saif al-Islam al-Gaddafi, chairman of the Gaddafi International Charity and Development Foundation (GICDF) and a son of Libyan strongman Muammar al-Gaddafi, for his provisional liberty granted on April 25 by Makati City Regional Trial Court Justice Winlove Dumayas.

Ihsanuglo expressed hopes the scheduled third tripartite meeting in Manila on May 26-29 for the review of the FPA among the OIC, GRP, and MNLF/ will succeed for the restoration of peace, security and stability in Mindanao.

Meanwhile, Malacanang's peace panel for the three-way talks has retained/ the/ representatives of the ARMM led by regional Gov. Datu Zaldy Uy Ampatuan, who has consistently supported the Mindanao peace process.

"We in the ARMM are ready as ever to help, in whatever way possible, within the scope of our administrative and political powers, to hasten the three-way effort of resolving all the misunderstandings on the peace agreement through a tripartite effort by the MNLF, the Arroyo administration and the OIC," said Ampatuan.

Ihsanuglo also alluded to the leadership feud in the MNLF that arose anew following the installation by some "300 ground commanders and 32 Central Committee members" of Cotabato City Mayor Muslimin Sema as MNLF chairman in a meeting in Pagadian City on April 1-3.

Misuari and his followers have questioned the challenge that Sema posed to his leadership. (By EDD K. USMAN, Manila Bulletin, May 30)

factions in the past, would not affect the three-party talks to review the 1996 final peace agreement between the national government and the MNLF.

"The MNLF should be united. Any organization should be towards that goal, although this is purely an internal matter (to MNLF). We just hope this will not derail the review of the implementation of the FPA in terms of who should represent (the MNLF). We hope it will help facilitate unity to avoid confusion," said Tan. (By EDD K. USMAN – manila bul, april 12, 2008)

**UK** . . . from page 1

"She (Munn) talked with Secretary Ermita about it as well Secretary Romulo and Secretary Dureza and they all said they welcomed the suggestion," Beckingham said. "So what we have to do now is to find someone who would be of interest to your government and the MILF to come out here and there is an agreement and that is final

The pullout of Malaysian troops from the International Monitoring Team (IMT) is certain, according to Malaysian defense chief Gen. Tan Sri Abdul Aziz.

The Malaysian defense chief made the announcement during a visit here following talks with top military officials led by Armed Forces chief Gen. Hermogenes Esperon.

Aziz led Malaysian officials in the discussion with Philippine government officials on the mechanics of the gradual withdrawal of their troops from the IMT, which is keeping tabs on the five-year ceasefire agreement with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

Last week, Malaysia said 20 of its 41 peacekeepers would leave on May 10 and the rest will be withdrawn by the end of August.

The move comes after the Malaysia-brokered peace talks floundered in December when MILF negotiators walked away from a meeting to protest the GRP's position that any accord should conform to the Philippine Constitution.

The pullout also triggered fears of renewed hostility breaking out in the absence of the monitoring team.

Aziz said he has informed the MILF's central committee of Malaysia's decision to pull out of the 60-man IMT, but he declined to elaborate on the reasons.

The MILF though ordered its guerrilla units to abide by the 2003 ceasefire with the Philippine government even after the Malaysian peacekeepers withdraw.

Some MILF members are however frustrated that long-running peace talks with the government for the creation of a homeland for Muslims in Mindanao have been stalled since December 2007.

Malaysian officials said the peace process between the Philippine government and the MILF is not making any progress.

A Malaysian official brokering the talks said the Philippine government should stop harping on technical points to jumpstart the peace negotiations.

Othman Abdul Razak, the chief Malaysian mediator, said the Philippine government may have to back off on its insistence to abide by its Constitution if it hopes to restart negotiations.

He said Malaysia's decision to start pulling out ceasefire monitors from the IMT is "meant to send a signal" to Philippine authorities that they should speed up efforts to sign a formal peace pact with the MILF.

Malacañang, on the other hand, expressed "deep concern" over Othman's statements.

"We are disappointed that the Malaysian facilitator Mr. Othman still does not comprehend why the GRP has to adhere to our Philippine Constitution as framework for

**MURAD** . . . from page 1

territory of a Muslim homeland the front want to govern through its proposed Bangsamoro Juridical Entity, or BJE.

The government and MILF have panels have failed to reach any consensus on such agenda during previous meetings the past months.

Peace talks between the government and the MILF, which is religious in character, started January 7, 1997, but gained headway only in 2003 with the help of Malaysia as mediator.

The Malaysian government, however, decided to start pulling out members of the multi-national ceasefire monitoring team in the South due to the failure of both sides to iron out a final deal on the ancestral domain topic of the peace talks.

The MILF is opposed to the conduct of any plebiscite, as constitutional requisite, in determining which areas can be fused together and be placed under the BJE.

"The issue is the very sincerity and true intention of the Government to pursue the Peace Talks," Murad said, without elaborating.

Murad said he has tasked the MILF's central committee to come out with a summary of events that lead to the pull out starting next month of the IMT, which is composed of soldiers and policemen from Malaysia, Brunei and Libya, a rehabilitation expert from Japan and a governance specialist from Canada.

"Let me reiterate to all including the international community that the MILF leadership is very serious and fully committed to resolve the conflict between the Bangsamoro people in Mindanao and the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) through the current peace process," Murad said. []

negotiations with the MILF," Presidential Adviser on Peace Process Jesus Dureza said.

Dureza said the GRP has already explained before Othman its stand over the issues of ancestral domain, citing the legal limitations under the Constitution.

The GRP maintained all questions over ancestral domain must be properly addressed in a national plebiscite to determine the extent of lands under Muslim control.

"We have continuously explained to (Othman) that the perceived delay is due to (the) GRP's exercise of due diligence to address constitutional issues in the draft ancestral domain agreement that the panel headed by (GRP chief negotiator) Rodolfo Garcia is working on without letup," Dureza said.

He said that Othman's "public display of exasperation" and unduly blaming the Philippine government for the delay is "totally unexpected from one who is tasked to facilitate."

"We suggest instead to Mr. Othman to stay the course and help the parties through," Dureza said. (*from www.philstar.com*)



## Palace optimistic on peace talks with MILF

Malacañang remained optimistic the peace talks with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) will succeed even as it accepted the decision of Malaysia to pull out from the contingent monitoring the ceasefire with the Muslim rebel group.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said the pullout

[PALACE/p.9]

**◀ CORE SHELTERS ---** A US serviceman snaps a photo of one of more than a dozen low-cost shelters, as protection from rain and heat of the sun, built by the Army's 64th Infantry Battalion, the local government unit of Datu Piang, Maguindanao, and the United States Armed Forces for residents in Barangay Pandi, Datu Oiang.[]

# OIC lauds temporary grant of freedom to Nur Misuari

## Head of int'l monitoring team congratulates Sema

The Malaysia-led International Monitoring Team (IMT) headed by Major Gen. Datu Mat Yasin Bin Mat Daud has congratulated Cotabato City Mayor Muslimin G. Sema on his recent installation as new chairman of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF).

Daud, an officer of the Royal Malaysian Armed Forces, wrote Sema a letter on April 7 (Monday) five days after the Pagadian City meeting of over 300 MNLF forces and central committee members who declared the top MNLF post vacant and installed Sema as chairman.

Other MNLF leaders still recognize detained Nur Misuari as their chairman.

An e-mail to the Manila Bulletin from Cotabato City sent by Abdullah Cusain, media officer, said Daud extended his "sincere gratitude and best wishes" to Sema, who was "unanimously" chosen as MNLF's chairman, replacing Misuari.

The IMT composed of Malaysia as lead and members Libya, Brunei, and Japan is engaged in monitoring the ceasefire in Mindanao between the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the separatist Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

"I trust that the auspicious occasion is a lucid testament of the Bangsamoro People on your active role in ensuring peace and stability in this beautiful

[HEAD/p.10]

The Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) Secretary General Ekmeleddin Ihsanuglo on Saturday welcomed the temporary freedom granted to Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) chieftain Nur Misuari.

Misuari had spent over seven years in detention counting from the time he was arrested in Malaysia on Nov. 24, 2001.

Ihsanuglo asked the two signatories to the 1996 final peace agreement (FPA) — Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the MNLF — to proceed with the implementation of the FPA.

In a press statement posted in the OIC's website, the OIC official rejoiced as he "welcomed the decision of the Philippines authorities to release on bail Professor Nur Misuari, chairman of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), after many years of detention and house arrest."

Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) Chairman Al-Hajj Murad Ebrahim issued a statement on Sunday putting the blame on the GRP for the crisis consuming the peace negotiation.

"Why is Malaysia pulling back its contingent in the International Monitoring Team?" Murad asked in [www.luwaran.com](http://www.luwaran.com).

"The Philippine Government bears the responsibility to comply with its commitment to adhere to the consensus points and the memorandum of agreement (MoA) draft proposal on Ancestral Domain.

Such moves will avert the peace process from falling apart," the MILF leader said. It will also send signals to the Malaysian government for the scheduling of the talks'

[OIC/p.10]