



### Multi-donor assisted projects to continue despite minor setbacks

Cotabato City - Despite some drawbacks in the Malaysian-brokered peace process, the prospect for peace is still high, the MILF Central Committee said on Monday, 28 January 2008 during a meeting attended by both the World Bank delegates and the Bangsamoro Development [MULTI/p.11]

**EXPLORING CONSTITUTIONAL OPTIONS ---**  
*Participants to the dialogue on constitutional options to Moro self-determination pose for posterity after a session during the two-day event held in Davao City.*



# Cross-section discussions on Moro-rule takes off

**Cooperation among government agencies usher developments**

COTABATO CITY (Jan.24) -- Line agencies and support offices under Malacañang have been cooperating with one another extensively to meet President Arroyo's development targets and full activation of the Mindanao Super Region, the Mindanao Economic and Development Council said.

Undersecretary Virgilio Leyretana, Chair of the Mindanao Economic Development Council (MEDCo), said there have been considerable accomplishments last year in furthering Malacañang's development agenda for the South and more could be achieved in 2008 if sectors involved in the initiative will continue pursuing the objective cohesively.

Leyretana, who is also presidential deputy development champion for the Mindanao Super

[MEDCO/p.10]

COTABATO CITY -- Lawyers, "constitution experts" and representatives of Mindanao's cross-section held a two-day forum last month in Davao City on constitutional options to the Moro quest for self-rule.

Participants to the forum agreed to vigorously pursue continuing dialogues on the subject to encourage peaceful discussions needed to generate support to the Mindanao peace process.

Members of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front's peace panel, a legal counsel of the Moro National Liberation Front, Randolph Parcasio, and Speaker Paisalin Tago of the 24-seat Regional Assembly in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao attended the January 16-17 event, held at the Marco Polo hotel in Davao City.

The two day gathering was jointly organized by the Institute for Autonomy and Governance (IAG) and its German benefactor, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation (KAF).

The IAG, under its executive director, Benedicto

[CROSS/p.11]

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## Is Sulu ID system viable?

DAVAO CITY (MindaNews/21 January) – Residents of Patikul in Sulu, 12 years old and above, are now card-bearing residents with the launching over the weekend of the “citizen identification card” but the provincial governor says this is not part of the proposed national ID system.

A press statement from the Sulu Media Desk said the ID card system is aimed at “curbing crimes and deterring terrorism” and serves as a “database for local census.”

The ID card’s signatory, however, is the commanding officer of the 3rd Marine Brigade, Col. Natalio C. Ecarma. The seal of the Philippine Marine Corps is on the upper right, the seal of the local government of Patikul is on the upper left.

Sulu Governor Sakur Tan said the provincial ID system was launched in Patikul, whose population is “more than 50,000” but “we are going to issue identification cards in all towns and we have the support of the local government officials and the citizens themselves.”

Tan explained their ID system is not part of the proposed national ID system. “This is our initiative and while politicians and other groups in Manila argue about the national ID system, my province is already implementing our own citizen identification card system. This will also establish an accurate census in Sulu,” he

[ID/p.9]

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## Malaysia meeting fails to revitalize moribund peace talks

Negotiators of the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) led by Peace Process Undersecretary Rodolfo Garcia and Mohagher Iqbal, MILF Information Committee chairman, respectively, sneaked into Malaysia last week for an “executive meeting” last Jan. 31 and Feb. 1 but failed to revitalize the moribund Mindanao peace process.

Datuk Abdu Razak Othman, tasked by the office of Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi to facilitate the peace talks, invited GRP and MILF chief negotiators Garcia, a former Army general who had fought Moro rebels in Mindanao, and Iqbal to try to revive the stalled negotiation which has been dragging for last 10 years.

“I already got the nod of the President and her Cabinet on a new agreement to jumpstart the peace talks,” Garcia told foreign news agency Reuters over the weekend.

Othman sought at the meeting Garcia’s submission of a modified draft on the proposed homeland for the Bangsamoro people through the Bangsamoro Juridical Entity (BJE).

Reached by the Manila Bulletin, Iqbal said yesterday the meeting was not yet the start of the resumption of the talks, but an executive meeting.

“There was no breakthrough in our meeting in Malaysia on Jan. 31 and Feb. 1. We will have to return to Malaysia for another meeting and see if we can resume the negotiation after that,” Iqbal said.

The MILF official did not divulge the contents of the government’s new draft that came after the MILF peace panel aborted the 15th exploratory talks on Dec. 15-17 because of the government’s reference to “constitutional process.”

It has been the MILF’s unwavering stand not to accept the Constitution as parameter for the talks because it is a revolutionary organization.

At the Office on Muslim Affairs (OMA), Executive Director Datu Ali B. Sangki said Mindanaoans, particularly residents of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), have been waiting for a reign of peace through the negotiation.

“I am appealing to the peace panels of the national government and the MILF to fast track the resolution of their differences so the peace talks can resume. Even as I believe in their commitments to resolving the conflict in Mindanao, every person or group must also support the negotiators so peace can be attained,” said Sangki.

In a related development, Muhammad Ameen, who chairs the MILF Central Committee Secretariat, urged the administration of President Arroyo not to leave the peace

[MALAYSIA/p.8]

## Australia allots P70-M fund aid for Mindanao

### Vows to strengthen assistance program for conflict-hit areas

Australia has vowed to "improve and strengthen" its assistance program for peace building in strife-torn Southern Philippines with the allocation of A\$ 1.8 million (P70 million) to boost the capacity of local institutions in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).

In the last five years, about half of Australia's aid to the Philippines goes to peace and development initiatives in Mindanao.

"Through the responsive scheme of the Philippines-Australia Community Assistance Program (PACAP), Australia is providing about A\$ 1.8 million to assist and train local organisations, particularly in the ARMM, in responding to the needs of conflict-affected communities, especially in rural livelihood opportunities," stated in a document entitled "Australia-Philippines Development Assistance Strategy 2007-2011."

The assistance is part of the A\$ 30 million (P1.15 billion) earmarked for the southern Philippines from 2005 to 2010.

About one-third of PACAP's assistance for community and people's organizations is disbursed to groups in Mindanao, which is approximately A\$ 7 million (P250.6 million) over five years, it stated.

"Australia will improve and strengthen its assistance for peace-building in Mindanao. We will work closely with local institutions and other donors, recognising the complexity and sensitivity of the issues affecting peacebuilding," the document stated

It also announced that additional expertise will be provided to assess and manage the implementation of Canberra-backed peace initiatives in Mindanao.

Under the four-year development assistance program, Australia will respond with appropriate resources in timely fashion to support the expected formal peace agreement between the government of the Philippines and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

Since 1997, the Australian government has been the largest donor to the government of the Republic of the Philippines-United Nations Multi-Donor Program (GRP-UN MDP) that helps former Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) members and their families return to mainstream society and contribute to the peace and development efforts in Mindanao.

Australia's total fund contribution to the program, [AUSTRALIA/p.8]

## ID system in Sulu is illegal, Pimentel says

Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Q. Pimentel, Jr. (PDP-Laban) said yesterday the mandatory issuance and wearing of identification (ID) cards by residents of Sulu should be disallowed for being illegal.

Pimentel said the wearing of IDs was ordered by the military without waiting for Congress to enact a law mandating a national ID system in accordance with a decision of the Supreme Court.

The ID system in Sulu was reportedly the brainchild of Col. Natalio Ecarma, commanding officer of the 3rd Marine Brigade stationed in Jolo Sulu, with the support of the provincial government.

Ecarma said that IDs would help military and police authorities in combating terrorism and crimes in the island province.

Pimentel voiced apprehensions that residents in Sulu found not wearing identification card would be harassed and perhaps detained by government troops, on suspicion that they are terrorists and criminals. "I suggest to all concerned to revoke the IDs issued without any legal basis in Sulu," the senator from Mindanao said.

"The ID unnecessarily makes dissidents out of the residents of the province who think that IDs are illegal and uselessly create tensions there," he said.

Pimentel asked the leadership of the Armed Forces of the Philippines why it is tolerating this illegal activity, as he pointed out that even Malacañang has admitted that the mandatory issuance and wearing of IDs by the citizens could only be possible if Congress approves the corresponding law.

The ID system was first launched in Patikul town with a population of 50,000 but the plan of the AFP calls for implementing it in all municipalities of Sulu.

Pimentel has filed a bill institutionalizing a national ID system but it is intended to make it easy for the people to transact business with all government agencies, as well as with banks and other entities.

He noted that the ID system in Sulu had angered Muslim residents because the symbol of the cross is printed on the face of the ID card. The Muslim residents suspect that there is a hidden agenda behind the issuance of the IDs.

Some of them also remarked that the ID system makes them feel that Sulu has become a "garrison state," Pimentel said

Sulu Gov. Abdulsakur Tan must explain his alleged support for the ID system introduced by the military, he added.

Other Mindanao leaders have also expressed reservation about the Sulu ID system.

## Kidapawan mayor admits paying P100K to extortionists

KIDAPAWAN CITY (MindaNews/23 Jan) – City Mayor Rodolfo Gantuangco has admitted giving P100,000 to the Al Khobar Group, which has been known for its extortion activities victimizing politicians and business establishments as some sort of protection money. The mayor, however, was quick to stress that he did not give in to the extortionists' demand for protection money, but as a move to trace their identities and location, and hopefully break into the Al Khobar's inner circles.

He revealed in his affidavit that the amount, in two equal installments, was deposited in the account of a certain Nacir Abison at the Equitable PCI Bank's branch in Ipil, Zamboanga Sibugay. Gantuangco even has Abison's account number – 1177-06531-1.

The first installment, upon the mayor's instruction, was deposited by Insp. Benjamin Mauricio on Nov. 26. The second deposit was made on Dec. 10.

The mayor, however, has issued contradicting statements as to the source of the funds.

In his affidavit dated Dec. 17, he said the P100,000 was taken from the peace and order funds of the city government. But last Tuesday, when interviewed over radio station DXCA, Gantuangco said the money did not come from public funds.

On Nov. 26, a bomb exploded at the baggage counter of the Kidapawan Mega Center Corporation (KMCC) mall along Dayao Street, instantly killing a baggage boy and wounding seven other mall goers.

Police investigators blamed the Al Khobar group for the blast, supposedly because the city government refused to give in to the group's demand of P100,000 in protection money on a monthly basis.

A day after the bombing, Gantuangco confirmed over radio station DXND the extortion attempt. But at that time, he said he did not give in to Al Khobar's demand, the reason the group bombed the mall.

Now it appears the mayor did heed the extortionists' demand when he made the first deposit on Nov. 26 even if the day after, he denied in a radio broadcast that he did not give money to Al Khobar (Williamor A. Magbanua/MindaNews)

## MILF sends man to Saudi in bid to win OIC support

CAMP DARAPANAN, SHARIFF KABUNSUAN – Separatist Moro guerrillas have sent an emissary to Saudi Arabia in a bid to win the support of an influential group of Islamic states for the guerrillas' bid to establish self-rule in Mindanao, a top guerrilla leader said.

Mohagher Iqbal, chief negotiator of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), told the Inquirer that the MILF representative had briefed members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) on the problems hounding the peace process with the government.

"It's part of our reaching out to the OIC," Iqbal said.

But he said the MILF did not seek the 57-member OIC's intervention to bring back the talks on track.

The MILF backed out of the negotiating table last year, accusing the government of tampering with the draft agreement on territory. It said government negotiators illegally inserted the phrase "constitutional process" in the document.

"The meeting (with the OIC) was aimed at giving our side and not asking them to help resolve the snag in the talks," Iqbal said.

He said the MILF learned that its representative had already talked with the OIC.

Iqbal said that as the peace talks dragged, the danger of hostilities was increasing.

In Iligan City, Moro activists announced plans to stage a "Walk for Peace" to help convince the government and the MILF to resume negotiations.

"We are very much inspired by what the Sumilao farmers did and were able to achieve for their cause," Hadji Abdullah Dalidig, chair of the Muslim Multisectoral Movement for Peace and Development, said.

Dalidig said at least 100 Muslim peace advocates would march from Marawi City to Malacandilang, starting Feb. 4.

"We want to bring to the doorsteps of political power the urgent message of salvaging the peace process," Dalidig said.

The Walk for Peace will take the same route as the Sumilao farmer's "Walk for Land, Walk for Justice," he said.

But Dalidig said that unlike what the Sumilao farmers did, the peace activists would take rides at some point of the campaign.

On Monday, at least 2,000 people gathered at the public plaza of Iligan and urged the government and the MILF to resume the talks.

Similar rallies have also been planned in Zamboanga del Sur, Zamboanga del Norte and Zamboanga Sibugay, according to organizers.

## MILF still rejects plebiscite on BJE

COTABATO CITY – The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) knew all along that the government cannot concede a territory for its proposed Muslim homeland without constitutional restraints, but it has never softened its demand not to subject the creation of such a set-up to a plebiscite.

The peace panel of the MILF balked at pursuing its supposed 15th exploratory talks with the government in Malaysia two weeks ago after the administration asserted in a draft agreement on ancestral domain the “constitutional process” in establishing the territory to be covered by the proposed Bangsamoro Juridical Entity (BJE).

The MILF, in its website ([www.luwaran.com](http://www.luwaran.com)) said its peace panel rejected in 2005 the government’s offer of federalism.

“In rejecting the proposal, the MILF argued that the 1987 Constitution is unitary in character (and) does not allow sharing of sovereign powers to states as in a federal form of government,” it said.

The MILF said the offer was contained in a document submitted to its peace panel during the seventh GRP-MILF exploratory talks in Guoman, Port Dickson, Selangor in Malaysia.

The MILF has also been consistent in its non-recognition of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, which originally covered only four provinces, but was expanded in 2001 as part of the government’s Sept. 2, 1996 peace pact with the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF).

The MNLF is formerly the largest separatist Muslim rebel movement.

Peace talks between the government and the MILF started on Jan. 7, 1997, but gained headway only in 2003 with the help of Malaysia as mediator.

Government and MILF negotiators have agreed in principle, in previous meetings, to fuse the ARMM with about a thousand other Moro-dominated areas outside the autonomous region to comprise the proposed BJE.

According to observers, among them Muslim peace advocates, one serious constraint in the peace talks is the ongoing tripartite review of the peace accord between the government and the MNLF which started last November in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

The three parties involved – Malacañang, the MNLF, and the Organization of Islamic Conference – agreed to focus on five concerns: education, Sharia, political representation of Moro communities, regional security force, and natural resources as the parameters to enhance the 11-year-old peace accord.

[MILF REJECT/p.8

## Solon asks gov’t, MILF to resume peace talks

### Airs fears over massing of forces in preparation for war

MARAWI CITY – Rep. Ali Pangalian Balindong (2nd District, Lanao del Sur) has called on the national government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) to resume the stalled peace talks, airing fears over current massing of MILF and military forces in Mindanao for what he described as “obvious preparation for war.”

Balindong aired the appeal in a privilege speech entitled “Muslim Problem is Filipino Problem” delivered at the House of Representatives last Jan. 28.

He echoed their clamor for peace by thousands of people who participated in rallies and mass actions in Mindanao. He noted that the “massive demonstrations” failed to get attention of the concerned parties.

“I urge all parties (GRP and MILF) to go back to the negotiation table and talk peace once and for all. Whatever it is that GRP is willing to give whether autonomy or federalism, it must be stable and permanent. It must also be meaningful and able to effect change and, finally peace,” the lawyer-solon said.

The exploratory talks between the GRP and MILF peace panels hit a snag over the issue of legal procedure in handling the territorial demand of the rebel group at the meeting in Kuala Lumpur Malaysia last Dec. 4. Since then, there has been a lull between the two panels.

Balindong cited the need to break the lull “because the massing of troops by both the AFP and the MILF Mujahideen, particularly Commander Bravo of Lanao del Norte, has been taking place in the past several days.”

Other civilian authorities said Commander Bravo, an MILF field leader, and his men are massing forces in the hilly areas bordering the two Lanao provinces.

Bravo’s group was responsible for several attacks on government installations in Lanao del Norte that had left heavy casualties and property damage.

The military has confirmed it is beefing up its forces, announcing the deployment of six more battalions in the south. It claimed though that the troop deployment was for operations against the communist insurgency.

But Balindong said the people in the south became “apprehensive because this military maneuver points to a preparation for war and is creating unnecessary tension among my people who are tired of war.”

War, he said, has stunted the growth of the Moro people, who had successfully waged a 500-year resistance against foreign colonizers.

The unilateral annexation of their lands to the Philippines had forced the Moro people to keep struggling

[SOLON/p.9]

## Muslim leaders condemn killing of priest

Muslim leaders led by Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) Gov. Datu Zaldy Uy Ampatuan condemned yesterday the killing of Oblates of Mary's Fr. Jose Reynaldo Roda last Tuesday evening in Tabawan, Tawi-Tawi, saying it was un-Islamic and inhuman.

"It's a satanic act and an affront to both Islam and Christianity," said Ampatuan, who counts as among his friends many members of the OMI community.

Roda would have been 53 years old on February 5.

"It is sad for a known peace advocate, as Fr. Roda was, to perish just like that, in the hands of people who do not fear God," the ARMM chief executive said, adding he had asked Tawi-Tawi Gov. Sadicul Sahali to do everything to help the police get and prosecute the gunmen responsible for the death of Roda.

ARMM regional police director Chief Supt. Joel Goltiao said 10 men wearing bonnets, suspected to be Abu Sayyaf bandits, shot and killed Roda when the priest resisted the abduction attempt.

Goltiao said pursuit operation was launched by the Philippine National Police in ARMM and Marines.

The kidnapers were still holding hostage a teacher, identified only as Omar Taup, after they failed to get Roda.

Undersecretary Nabil Tan of the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP) and Cotabato City Mayor Muslimin G. Sema also condemned the killing.

Sema, secretary general of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), described the priest's killing as "gruesome."

"We have directed MNLF brothers in Tawi-Tawi through Deputy Secretary General Abu Amri Taddik to monitor the incident. It's a gruesome act that we condemn vehemently in the highest possible term," the mayor said.

"Fr. Rey Roda is a friend to many Muslims here in Cotabato City," Sema, paying tribute to the slain man of God, said. "His untimely death is a great loss to the peace advocates and fighters against oppression and exploitation." Tan said the priest's killing is un-Islamic.

"It was a very unfortunate incident, senseless and perpetrated against the peace loving and religious. It is very unIslamic; the ones who did it must be beasts and not a human being," said Tan.

Earlier, House Deputy Speaker Simeon A. Datumanong said asked the authorities to immediately investigate the incident and bring the culprits to justice.

"Islam is a religion of peace that respects all of humankind, including religious leaders of other faiths," said Datumanong.

The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) said Islam strictly forbids the killing of religious leaders and other noncombatants. (Edd Usman, Manila Bulletin, published January 18, 2008)

## Palace, TESDA to fund scholarships for Muslims

COTABATO CITY - The Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) and the Malacañang's External Affairs Office (EAO) are set to forge a memorandum of agreement (MoA) concerning grants of scholarships and skills trainings for deserving Muslim students.

Aladdin Ampatuan, assistant secretary for Muslim concerns, said his office and TESDA Director-General Secretary Augusto Syjuco have agreed in principle on the joint venture during their meeting at the latter's office in Taguig City last Jan. 23.

"A draft MoA is being prepared for evaluation by the TESDA and EAO technical working groups, which will recommend the final draft and ensure that the form and substance are mutually agreed and enforceable in accordance to the prescribed viable terms and conditions set forth," Ampatuan said.

Ampatuan did not give specifics about the bilateral venture but he assured that it would be another milestone in President Arroyo's desire to help uplift the living conditions of Muslim Filipinos.

He the program would assist deserving and qualified Muslim individuals to obtain scholarship grants, undergo trainings under TESDA, and acquire knowledge and technical skills on enhancing their productivity.

The members of the technical EAO working group who accompanied Ampatuan in the courtesy call include Kadil Kali, Director II and chief of staff; Ismael S. Mamokan, Jr., executive assistant III; and Assib Ibrahim, administrative Assistant IV.

In another development, Ampatuan said that upon his request, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) hierarchy has directed its offices in Regions 4B (MIMAROPA), 9,10 and 12 to submit profiles of projects directly or indirectly serving Muslim communities in their respective areas of jurisdiction.

The profiles, which would be submitted to the EAO, must cover descriptions, beneficiaries, targets and accomplishments of projects affecting Muslim areas, Ampatuan quoted DENR Undersecretary Manuel Gerochi as telling his people.

Ampatuan and Gerochi, representing Secretary Lito Atienza, met at the DENR main office on Jan. 18 on the initiative of the former to have periodic reports on government projects and programs involving Muslim communities outside the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) By ALIG. MACABALANG

## Peace panels urged to be more transparent

DAVAO CITY (MindaNews) – Both government and Moro Islamic Liberation Front peace panels have to be more transparent to the stakeholders in Mindanao about their negotiations, an official of Kusog Mindanaw said.

Rey Magno Teves, secretary general of Kusog Mindanaw (Mindanao Force), a forum for consensus-building among peace and development stakeholders in Mindanao said major Mindanao-wide formations for local government units, national legislators, civil society, church and academe, business, media and other sectors will gather here on November 30 and December 1 to ask for updates on the status of the GRP-MILF peace talks and related issues.

“We want to hear more from our (peace) panelists about the negotiations,” Teves said stressing it would be more difficult for the commitments in the peace agreement to win in the plebiscite if the people are left out.

The forum’s theme is “The Shape of the Forthcoming Peace Agreement Between the GRP and MILF.”

Teves was at the Kapehan sa SM City, where he joined a panel of officials from the Bishops-Ulama Forum and the military and police promoting the Mindanao Week of Peace activities.

Government peace panel chair Rodolfo Garcia and MILF peace panel chair Mohagher Iqbal have confirmed their attendance to the conference on December 1, Teves told MindaNews. Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Jesus Dureza will also be around.

To present their issues to the panel chairs are Vicente Lao of the Mindanao Business Council, South Cotabato Gov. Daisy Avance-Fuentes and Abhoud Syed Lingga of the Institute of Bangsamoro Studies.

“The discussion will take place amid general complaint that major stakeholders are not informed properly and are not being involved in discussing and working out possible solutions to critical negotiation issues such as ancestral domain, territory, self-determination and governance,” Kusog Mindanaw said in a press statement.

Teves said it is “not a good situation to maintain where the stakeholders are not so much updated about the negotiation.” But he

[PEACE/p.8]

## Sulu ID system draws reactions from leaders

### Implementation scheme is susceptible to bias, solon says

ZAMBOANGA CITY – “The concept is good, but the manner of implementation could be prejudicial” Congressman Munir M. Arbison (2nd district, Sulu) on the establishment of an identification (ID) system in the island province.

He noted the support given to the provincial government in connection with the ID system.

He also observed that the military is spearheading the process of identifying the ID card holders.

“I am not against the idea, but the manner of implementation is not fair to local residents as the appropriate agencies to spearhead the program are least tapped to do it,” he said, adding the local government unit should organize things regarding the system.

“There could be possible bias in the manner of implementation of the ID system as the agencies tapped are not necessarily having personal knowledge of the whereabouts of the local residents,” he said.

The rightful entity knowledgeable of the residents is the barangay or municipality, and the officials know their neighbors and constituents, he said.

The Sulu solon said there was no consultation made before its implementation.

“I asked several mayors in District II if they were informed about it, and they said no communication was sent to them,” he also said.

Bangingi (Tongkil, Sulu) Mayor Wahid Sahidulla, in a long distance interview, said “no Provincial Board resolution was passed for the purpose, and no public hearing was conducted to inform the public that the ID system is set to be established in the province.

“With the military spearheading the move, instead of safeguarding your constituents, you are putting them in hot water. Bias in the manner of identification is possible here. In my case, I just want to secure my municipality,” he said.

He also said basically, the concept could intrude into one’s privacy and in so doing, the human rights aspect is threatened.

In the intellectual-religious sector, Hji. Ahmad Sali, columnist of Mindanao Chronicle and resident of Jolo, said on the national level, the ID system was marred with controversies, and various quarters reacted against the move.

It is of doubtful legality, and motive. It can be an instrument of harassment, coercion and human rights abuses, he said.

[SULU/p.8]

**AUSTRALIA** . . . from page 3

now on its fourth phase and known as the Act for Conflict Transformation (ACT for Peace), is A\$ 34.4 million (P1.23 billion) from 1997 to 2010. By CHARISSA M. LUCI, Manila Bulletin, January 12, 2008

**ID** . . . from page 3

Some leaders said there was no consultation conducted on the plan to adopt the system.

Another leader said the implementation is susceptible to bias. (Manila Bulletin – [www.mb.com.ph](http://www.mb.com.ph) – provincial section, February 1, 2008)

**MILF** . . . from page 4

“Our failure at peace in Mindanao is not because the people desire violent means and solutions,” said a manifesto of the Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society (CBCS), one of the rally organizers.

“It is apparently caused by leaders who have no heart to answer the calling and take the political will essential for the path to peace.” (By Jeffrey Maitem, Ryan Rosauro

Philippine Daily Inquirer First Posted 23:46:00 01/22/2008)

**MILF REJECT** . . . from page 5

Libya, through Saiful Islam Gaddafi, son of President Muammar Gad-dafi, has appealed to the MNLF, the MILF, and leaders of the ARMM, in a meeting last Dec. 14 in Makati City, to unite and adopt a “common peace road-map” for Mindanao’s Bang-samoro communities.

Libya is a member of the OIC, a pan-Islamic bloc of more than 50 Muslim countries, including oil-rich Middle Eastern nations, which helped broker the GRP-MNLF peace agreement.

**MALAYSIA** . . . from page 2

process hanging.

Ameen said the President, who will end her term in 2010, should not replicate the acts of her predecessors who all “passed the buck” to the next President.

The GRP-MILF peace talks already went through the regimes of former Presidents Fidel V. Ramos and Joseph Estrada. (from [www.mb.com.ph](http://www.mb.com.ph), February 5, 2008, by EDD USMAN)

**PEACE** . . . from page 7

acknowledge the need to recognize that there are indeed details that still cannot be revealed in the course of the negotiations.

B/Gen. Antonio Amodia, deputy chief of the army’s Davao-based 10th infantry division said the signing of the peace agreement is not even a guarantee peace would be achieved in Mindanao. He cited the possibility of another group to dissent.

Teves clarified that the peace agreement is a crucial step to lasting peace but should be backed with efforts in other aspects, including the economic, social, cultural and religious.

Aleem Mahmud Adilao echoed Amodia’s opinion. He voiced out that one problem in the peace process on the Moro side, is that the peace process has involved mainly higher officials, and have left out stakeholders at the grassroots level such as the traditional leaders of the Moro people.

“Kung mapirmahan, wala naapil ang mga katawhan sa ubos,” (If it (the final peace agreement) would be signed, it does not involve people at the grassroots) Adilao said.

Catholic priest Pete Lamata of the Imams-Pastors-Priests Forum said one of the offshoots of inter-religious dialogue is to promote understanding at the grassroots level, at the village level.

The 13-month impasse on the issue of territory in the talks between the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) ended last month with a compromise on what areas would comprise the future Bangsamoro Juridical Entity (BJE) “immediately” and “later,” MILF chair Al Haj Murad Ebrahim told MindaNews last month.

The two panels had earlier agreed that the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) would constitute the core of the future BJE. In addition, the government peace panel proposed the possible inclusion of 613 Moro-dominated villages in Mindanao subject to a plebiscite while the MILF proposed the inclusion of a much wider area.

The disparity between the proposals eventually led to an impasse in early September last year. (Walter I. Balane/MindaNews)

**SULU** . . . from page 7

Sali also said that the illiterate, unschooled people of Sulu will easily “fall prey to the scheme of things.”

The people of Sulu must rise in unity against this ID system, he added. (Manila Bulletin website, [www.mb.com.ph](http://www.mb.com.ph), published January 29, 2008) By GERTRUDE SIENES

**DEPED** . . . from page 12

comprehensive education to Muslim children.

“While the ALIVE Program is integral to their education, we also recognize the need for them to learn the standard subjects taught in public schools – Mathematics, English, Science, Filipino, and Makabayan.”

The Deped said it would help schools with funding needs and facilitate their grant application to the financial assistance program extended by Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC). Under the OIC’s funding program, madaris can avail of funds to cover the improvement of physical facilities such as classrooms, furniture, laboratory equipment, and libraries. DepEd will help schools who pass the requirements.

Part of the assistance is expected to go to capability building, which includes training of Muslim teachers or asatidz, management training for administrators and finance managers, and installation of accounting and financial systems.

Before private madaris can avail of the financial assistance, they must obtain a permit to operate from the DepEd Regional Office in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). They should also offer the Standard Curriculum for Private Madaris as prescribed under DepEd Order 51, s. 2004 (By Kristine L. Alave Philippine Daily Inquirer)

**ID** . . . from page 2

said.

He said the provincial government shouldered the expenses for the ID system.

Sulu has 19 towns and a total population of at least 600,000.

Patikul Mayor Kabir Hayudini is the holder of card number 0001. The ID’s front, aside from the local government’s seal and the Marine Corps’ seal, shows the photograph of the bearer, the name, address, age, sex, civil status, ID number, the card owner’s name and signature and Ecarma’s signature.

The card is plastic, similar to ATM or credit cards.

At the back of the ID is a space for thumbmark, blood type, date of birth, place of birth and persons to contact in emergencies.

“The people are really very supportive of the ID system and that’s why we have Patikul as model for this citizen identification card system in cooperation with the Sulu provincial government, the military and police authorities and the national census (office),” Hayudini was quoted by the Sulu Media Desk as saying.

“The identification card system in Sulu province is a collaborative effort between local governments, the Armed Forces (of the Philippines), the Philippine National Police and other stake holders of peace and development in the province,” Hayudini said.

**COL ALI** . . . from page 12

highest regards the strong contribution and accomplishments of the Brunei contingent in the overall efforts to sustain the ceasefire on the ground and keeping up the confidence and cooperation of the conflict-affected communities to the peace process.

Ali was the fourth that headed the spirited Brunei contingent. His predecessors were Col. Hji Aminuddin Ihsan bin Poksm DSP Hji Abidin, Col Jol Jublee bin Hji Bangkol and Col Mohammad Arifin bin Hji Tarif.

Lt Col Pg Hji Tajuddin assumes the leadership of the Brunei Contingent. He arrived two days ago with his new three staff namely Maj Pg Rumaizi, Lt Md Yusra and Lt Ak Yusri, who replaced Maj Omar Shariff, Lt (U) Razanol Hardi and Sgt Azmain.

In a farewell dinner last night, Col Ali conveyed his endless gratitude to the people in the communities he served, civil society organizations, his colleagues in the IMT especially to the new IMT Head of Mission MGen Datuk Mat Yasin Bin Mat Daud, MILF CCCH Chairman Von al Haq, GRP CCCH Chairman BGen Reynaldo Sealana, 6<sup>th</sup> ID Commander MGen Reynaldo Ferrer, Armed Forces of the Philippines, Cotabato City Mayor and MNLF Secretary General Datu Muslimin Sema, Governor Andal Ampatuan and other Local Government Executives, MILF Central Committee, Brunei Ambassador Emaleen Teo and to the Royal Government of Brunei Darussalam Headed by His Majesty Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah.

Col Ali and Col Tajuddin will pay their exit and courtesy call, respectively, this morning with the MILF Central Committee at Camp Darapanan, Sultan Kudarat, Shariff Kabunsuan

**SOLON** . . . from page 5

for self-determination up to these days.

The government under different leaderships tried but failed to resolve the Moro rebellion, Balindong said.

Balindong said the Philippine government under various administrations provided “palliative solutions” to the Moro struggle for self-determination, which came about when the Spaniards sold the country for ,000 to the Americans.

The Moro leaders in Lanao, Cotabato and Sulu refused to be part of the Philippines, he recalled.

“The solutions... offered by the series of past administrations, so far, are mere palliatives – a temporary cure designed to be effective only during a certain administration but the same ailment recurring just as soon as the next,” he lamented. — www.mb.com.ph, Feb.2, 2008, By ALI G. MACABALANG

“The ID system will deter crimes and prevent terrorism because it would be easy to identify those who are not from Sulu and this will protect the citizens. It will also be beneficial for business and other transactions,” he said. (MindaNews)

**MEDCO** . . . from page 1

Region, said recent reports from the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) revealed that 32 percent of major infrastructure projects in Mindanao are nearing completion.

Some of the projects are being built in communities benefiting from President Arroyo's peace overture with Moro fronts in Mindanao.

Leyretana said barring undue circumstances, the government is likely to finish the construction this year of the Dinagat Island Road Network project, which involves the improvement of a 15-kilometer road in Surigao del Norte.

Construction works for the three other major road projects such as the Zamboanga West Coast Road, Awang-Upi-Kalamansig-Lebak Road and Surigao-Davao Coastal Road are ongoing and could be completed by next year, according to Leyretana.

Leyretana said the improvement of the Zamboanga West Coast Road now 18.56 percent complete. The thoroughfare interconnects the coastal municipalities of Sibuco, Sirawai, Siocon, Baliguian and Gotalac at the border of Zamboanga del Sur and Zamboanga del Norte.

The Surigao-Davao Coastal road connecting the provinces of Surigao del Norte, Surigao del Sur and Davao Oriental is also 39.21 percent finished. Composed of five road sections, the Bacuag-Claver Provincial boundary, provincial boundary-Tandag-Marihatag, Marihatag-Barobo-Tagbina-Hinatuan, Bislig-Manay and Manay-Mati, this road will be completed next year at a total cost of P5.8 billion.

Meanwhile, the 87.6 kilometer Awang-Upi-Kalamansig-Lebak road project that would traverse isolated areas in Maguindanao and Sultan Kudarat is expected to fully take off this year.

Leyretana said completion of power and transmission projects is also under way as shown by reports submitted by the Department of Energy (DOE) late last year.

He said due for completion by 2009 are the Abaga-Kirahon and Maramag-Bunawan 230 kV Backbone transmission projects, which are currently working for the acquisition of the right of way (ROWA) for the tower sites and stringing section.

DOE also reported that 91 percent or 9,140 barangays in Mindanao have been energized. To achieve full electrification in Mindanao by 2009, a total of 898 barangays are still to be provided with electricity, according to Leyretana.

"Year 2008 seems to be a very promising year for

**EXTORT** . . . from page 12

station dxND in Kidapawan City, said he has even talked to the person that sent him text messages using the same mobile phone number the suspect used to contact him previously.

"He was the same person that demanded 'protection money' from me several minutes after the Nov. 22 bombing of the KMCC Mall (in Kidapawan City). He was also the same person that instructed me how to remit the money they were asking for," Gan-tuangco told dxND.

Gantuangco said the caller claimed responsibility for the bombing of the tuna canning plant in Gen. Santos and warned to perpetrate more to force traders in the region to shell out 'protection money.'

Members of Central Mindanao's business community have also confirmed having received text messages from the Al-Khobar, alleging that the group perpetrated the bombing in Gen. Santos City "as an example" of how it can force traders to close shops.

Gantuangco said he was forced to convene the Kidapawan City peace and order council last Thursday, after having received text messages from the group, to formulate security measures to thwart possible bombings in Kidapawan City, seat of North Cotabato province.

Gantuangco said the person that called him and told him that they were behind the latest bombing in Gen. Santos City warned of retaliations for the mayor's role in the recent filing of criminal cases by the North Cotabato police against key leaders of the Al-Khobar.

Gantungco said his main objective for depositing money to a bank account the Al-Khobar gave him last November was to strengthen the case the local government of Kidapawan City was to file against them.

A local court has issued warrants of arrest for certain Al-Khobar members named in the complaint sheet the police and local officials in Kidapawan City filed at the North Cotabato prosecution office several weeks ago.

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the Mindanaons in terms of socio-economic growth," Leyretana told The Star via text message.

The Mindanao Super Region is part of the Super Region strategy announced by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo during her 2006 State of the Nation Address which aims to enhance the competitive advantage of regional groupings. []

**MULTI** . . . from page 1

Agency.

The Moro Islamic Liberation Front, undaunted by the challenges they face, is still optimistic that a peaceful settlement to the Bangsamoro problem would be possible.

*"Anytime the GRP is ready to talk with us on the consensus points, the MILF is always ready to go back to the negotiating table"*, said MILF Vice-Chair for Political Affairs Ghazali Jaafar.

On the other hand, Mindanao Trust Fund Task Team Leader Mary Judd sought to meet the members of the Central Committee to get fresh directives with regards to the ongoing implementation of the Mindanao Trust Fund - Reconstruction and Development Program (MTF-RDP).

The tripartite meeting also sought to address some pressing issues and concerns and the apprehensions posed by the current impasse of the talks in relation to the ongoing projects now being implemented in the Mindanao areas under the World Bank-administered MTF.

*"We are here to seek your guidance. How far we will go vastly depend on how far you want us to go"*, said Judd.

Admittedly, the MILF must be fully ready to assume the role of taking over the responsibility of leading their people once a new government for the Bangsamoro is in place.

This big task not only rests on the shoulders of the MILF. The BDA has also a big role to play – as an agency entrusted with the mission to carry out the delivery of development needs of the conflict affected areas in Mindanao.

Hence, the BDA is undoubtedly taking the bolder steps in preparation for the big responsibility they should handle in the future. In fact, BDA has already established itself as an institution as manifested in the various development programs whose implementation BDA has facilitated. To date, BDA is presently under way in the implementation of various projects in Mindanao.

Meanwhile, Atty. Lanang Ali, a senior officer of the Central Committee disclosed that their immediate need that calls for action with the assistance of the World Bank are as follows: rampant drug addiction among youth, techno transfer in farming, support to widows and the orphans and support to wounded or disabled combatants.

Shortly before the meeting ended, Judd has once again expressed commitment to continue and pursue the agreed plans, if the situation permits them to go on.ss

She likewise revealed her plan to ask for assistance from the Middle Eastern countries and the Islamic Development Bank to pool out resources for the MTF to which the MILF readily responded with enthusiasm.

*"You have our green light with you"*, Jaafar assured her.

Present during the meeting were: World Bank delegates such as Mary Judd, MTF secretariat Josefina Esguerra, Roberto Tordecilla; from BDA: Dr. Abas A. Candao, Dr. Saffrullah M. Dipatuan, Dr. Danda Juanday, Ustadz

**CROSS** . . . from page 1

Bacani, and KAF, through its representative to the Philippines Klaus Preschle, have been implementing various projects complementing the Mindanao peace process for almost a decade now.

*"The two-day event was not just for the benefit of the MILF, or the MNLF, but for all sectors in Mindanao,"* Bacani said.

Both the MILF and the MNLF are struggling for the setting up of a Bangsamoro governing mechanism for Moro communities in Mindanao. The two fronts, however, differ in their concepts of such an outfit.

The MNLF signed a peace pact with the government on September 2, 1996, now subject of a tripartite evaluation by the front, representatives of Malacañang, and the Organization of Islamic Conference, due to misunderstandings on the implementation of some of its provisions.

The government's 10-year-old peace talks with the MILF, which is more religious in character, hit a snag last December when the rebel group's peace panel balked from pursuing its supposed formal talks with government in Malaysia after learning that Malacañang was to assert again constitutional restraint in determining the Southern areas it wants to group together as Moro ancestral domain.

The MILF want the Moro domain covered by the Bangsamoro Juridical Entity, which is also to replace the ARMM government.

Lawyer Ishak Mastura, who is the ARMM's trade secretary, said it is important to have cross-section dialogues on possible solutions to the Moro struggle for self-rule in the wake of perceived constraints besetting the effort of the government to peacefully address it.

The MILF has been asserting the nationhood of Mindanao's Moro people, with the existence of sultanates that once had diplomatic and trade ties with other sultanates in what are now Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, and even in China, even before the Spaniards came in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Jesus Dureza has been pushing the plan to amend the Constitution to enable the government to offer a federal framework as a possible answer to the MILF's bid for Muslim-rule in the south.

Bacani said the output of participants to the KAF-assisted dialogue on possible constitutional remedies to the Mindanao problem can be used as reference for high-level discussions on the issue. []

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Abdulkadir Abdullah, Engr. Windel P. Diangcalan, Dan Dimakenal, Taps Julhani and Engr. Aida Silongan. Also in attendance were members of the MILF Central Committee like Vice-chair Ghazali Jaafar, Atty. Lanang Ali, and Muhammad Ameen. (BDA news and information bureau)

# Extort group owns up to GenSan bombing

**COTABATO CITY** - The dreaded Al-Khobar extortion ring has claimed responsibility for the deadly bombing of a tuna canning plant in Gen. Santos City Wednesday night, threatening to perpetrate more as part of a fund-raising campaign to sustain its operation in the troubled South.

Text messages have been circulating since Friday, purporting that the Al-Khobar was behind the bombing of the premises of the Philbest Tuna Canning Plant in Barangay Tumbler, Gen. Santos City, which left four people dead and caused serious injuries to 28 others.

Among those that received text messages from the Al-Khobar was Kidapawan City Mayor Luis Gantuangco, who has earlier admitted remitting last November P100,000 to the group, through a bank account in Ipil, Zamboanga del Sur in the name of Nacir Abison, after a spate of bombings in key areas under his jurisdiction.

Gantuangco, in an interview with Catholic

[EXTORT/p.10]

## DepEd to boost mainstreaming of Muslim schools

MANILA, Philippines – In a bid to popularize the Standard Curriculum in private madaris, the Department of Education (DepEd) has announced that it will extend assistance to madaris looking for funding as long as they pass the necessary requirements.

DepEd Secretary Jesli Lapus said the DepEd was set to provide help to madaris or Arabic schools that integrated the standard curriculum with the Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education (ALIVE) program. He said the initiative was aimed at mainstreaming the private madaris.

“Mainstreaming Madrasah Education in our system of basic education is one of the initiatives we have been undertaking to give our Muslim schoolchildren an education that is culturally sensitive,” Lapus said in a statement.

Undersecretary for Muslim Affairs Manaros Boransing said the project would provide

[DEPED/p.9]



*Members of the Brunei IMT contingent and MILF chief negotiator Mohaquer Iqbal (right) during a brief farewell meeting at Sultan Kudarat, Shariff Kabunsuan.*

## Col Ali of Brunei IMT bids farewell, new head arrives

(Verbatim copy, as is, from [www.luwaran.com](http://www.luwaran.com))

Lt Col Ali Bin Hji Sabar completed his tour of duty as Head of the Brunei contingent with the Malaysian-led International Monitoring Team (IMT) with remarkable accomplishments and good memories. Col Ali headed as well the IMT Team Site 1 based in Cotabato City covering the provinces of Bukidnon, Cotabato, Shariff Kabunsuan and Maguindanao which is being considered as the center of gravity with respect to the truce between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

The Brunei Team composed of 10 military officers illustrated an exemplary performance of duty since the deployment of the IMT in Mindanao in 2004 primarily tasked to watch over the implementation of the ceasefire accord between the government and the MILF.

Von Al Haq and BGen Reynaldo Sealana, Co-Chairmen of the GRP-MILF Ceasefire Committees, both cited the accomplishments and leadership of Col Alia and his team, adding that “The Brunei IMT is proving the great mettle that characterizes the Brunei soldiers as a whole.”

IMT Headquarters similarly acknowledged with

[COL ALI/p.9]