

# The Moro Times

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## Muslim Filipinos journey on hajj

BY NASSER SHARIEF

THIS holiday season, the international airport in Manila has not just been busy with inbound flights of balikbayans and vacationing overseas contract workers. 3,545 Filipino Muslims flew to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on a total of 13 hajj flights.

The hajj is one of the five pillars of Islam. Healthy and financially capable Muslim adults all over the world must perform the hajj at least once in their lifetime. During the pre-Spanish era in the Philippines, Muslims travelled for a year, island-hopping and changing vessels as often as needed to get to the Middle East. The ancient sea route starts in Zamboanga then to Sulu, Kota Kinabalu, Banjar Massen, Singapore through the Straits of Malacca, then Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and across the Indian Ocean to Madagascar off the West coast of Africa. Pilgrims then travel to Yemen at the mouth of the Red Sea to reach the seaport of Jeddah. At this point, pilgrims travel by land to Makkah (Mecca).

Today, the Holy City is no more than an eight-hour or so non-stop flight from the Ninoy Aquino International Airport to Jeddah or Medina. The Office on Muslim Affairs is the government agency that officially handles the hajj in the country.

Unfortunately, the modern-day hajj has been plagued by fraud and fly-by-night operators. Hundreds of unsuspecting pilgrims have been swindled by operators who take the money and leave the pilgrims stranded in Manila or, worse, in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This year's hajj has been more efficiently administered, according to Dr. Monib Maniri, Director of the Bureau of Pilgrimage, the office that directly handles all matters relating to hajj. The Bureau has handled all activities—from ticket booking to applying for e-visa with the Saudi Ministry of Hajj, to arranging the food and lodging while the pilgrim is in the holy town of Mecca, and the putting up of a mobile medical team comprising Filipino doctors.

All the flights landed in Medina, instead of the traditional landing in Jeddah, to enable the pilgrims to visit Prophet Muhammad's mosque. "Although the visit to the Prophet's mosque is optional per se, we view the arrangement as an add-on service to our pilgrims," says Undersecretary Sultan Yahya "Jerry" Tomawis, chief of the Office on Muslim Affairs. "More than half of the pilgrims go to Medina after completing the hajj anyway, so why not save them time, money and physical strain having to do a V-route, that is traveling some 480 kilometers from



■ (Above) A typical view of the inside of the tents of the Filipino pilgrims in Mina and Arafat where the pilgrims stay for 2 to 3 nights following the route of the ritual made by the patriarch Abraham who laid down the foundation of the Kaaba. (Right photo) Thousands of tents are set up to accommodate more than two million pilgrims from around the world in this year's hajj.

PHOTO COURTESY OF BUREAU OF PILGRIMAGE AND ENDOWMENT, OMA



■ Pilgrims trek to Arafat. The Saudi government had made a splendid improvement on amenities in the last few years making bridges, roads, ventilated tunnels, even elevators to make the hajj less strenuous, and make the pilgrims concentrate more on their spiritual journey.

PHOTO COURTESY OF BUREAU OF PILGRIMAGE AND ENDOWMENT, OMA



## Mindanao summits call for referendum

BY SAMIRA GUTOC, GANDHI KINIYO

STEP aside chacha. Mindanao peace movements are focusing efforts to resolve the legal impasse in the peace talks.

Without any report yet on the resolution of the ancestral domain coverage of a proposed Bangsamoro Juridical Entity (BJE) in the GRP-MILF talks, multi-sectoral movements convened in separate conferences in Mindanao to propose mechanisms to address the long-standing Bangsamoro conflict. A peace caravan and summit organized by the Mindanao People's Peace Movement convened in Lamitan, Basilan on Dec. 12-17 reviving a call in 2002 to supervise a UN-sponsored referendum on "Political Options in the Bangsamoro (Muslim) Areas of Mindanao and Palawan and the island provinces of Basilan, Sulu and Tawi-tawi."

The referendum will ask the Bangsamoro people whether they wish to remain with the Philip-

pinas as a genuinely autonomous government or a federal state or be an entirely separate and independent state.

Summit participants, numbering 500, support the immediate resumption of the stalled peace talks and laud the forthcoming review of the 1996 Final Peace Agreement between the GRP and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) by a tripartite body made up of the GRP and MNLF and the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) on Feb. 6-7, 2007 in Jeddah.

The summit also requested for the immediate release of jailed MNLF Chairman Nur Misuari so he can lead a 20-man delegation to the talks.

The request was echoed by participants of the series of consultative "Bangsamoro Peoples Congress" held in the Lanao provinces, Pikit in North Cotabato, Parang in Shariff Kabunsuan, Ampatuan in Maguindanao, Koronadal City, Palimbang in Sultan Kudarat, and in Sarangani Province from

November to December.

During the Pikit consultative congress last Dec. 9, Misuari thanked his supporters through a mobile phone call. He said he will seek a special meeting with the OIC secretary-general and the King of Saudi Arabia.

Youth leaders also convened at Mindanao Young Moro Leaders Conference" at Isla Parilla resort, Sarangani province on December 20 to 22 passing a one-page resolution to assert that "Bangsamoro" is their identity and nationality that the Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces (BIAF) should replace the Armed Forces of the Philippines in securing the proposed Bangsamoro homeland, also known as the Bangsamoro Juridical Entity (BJE), once an agreement is reached. Integration of the BIAF to the AFP mainstream is also rejected.

Organized by the United Youth for Peace and Development, (UNYPAD), the summit also demanded for a moratorium of the exploration and ex-

ploitation of natural resources within the BJE jurisdiction while the peace negotiation is going on and that the jurisdiction of the Bangsamoro ancestral domain must include full utilization, exploitation, conservation and disposition of natural resources. "A 'Reparation Law' must be enacted in congress to ensure allotment of budget which shall be utilized in the reparation and the payment of the human rights violation committed by the Philippine government to the Moro people," the resolution states.

The resolution also says that the Bangsamoro Development Authority (BDA) must assert its mandate to determine, lead and manage humanitarian rehabilitation and development within the conflict-affected areas of the BJE. For the BJE to be able to enter into treaty diplomatic and trade relations with other countries, the resolution says that there must be consular offices in foreign countries especially in the Middle East.

Mecca to Medina and then another 420 kilometer from Medina to Jeddah for the final flight home."

Dr. Maniri was especially pleased with the performance of his Bureau. "Notwithstanding the jitters that accompany the hajj especially late-registrations, our staff went out of their way to make the processing as smooth as possible employing novel ways borne out of years of experience in handling the hajj.

Late registration, however, is a perennial problem with the hajj in the Philippines. At the eleventh-hour, prospective pilgrims suddenly appear out-of-the-blue demanding to be accommodated. Registration for the hajj opened early in the year. But between that date and the last filing, barely a week away from the deadline set by the airline carrier, only a few had deposited the required fifty-percent down payment for the plane fare. The Office had been at pains making campaigns in Muslim-dominated areas around the country for intending pilgrims to register as "early birds" and avoid the crunch.

The Office on Muslim Affairs, for the first time, had raffled seven free-round trip tickets for its Muslim employees as an incentive. "This is something I am keen on since I was appointed head of the Office two years ago," says Undersecretary Sultan Jerry Tomawis. "My pet project is to give opportunity to employees, especially old-timers, who never had a chance to go on hajj because of financial limitations." Sarah Datu Imam, one of the lucky draws, was on the verge of tears, when her name was announced because it was her first time to go on hajj. The basic cost of hajj is about Php 120,000. In addition to the cost of the plane fare, OMA will bear the lodging and the mutawif fee of the seven employees.

Last year, 2,130, 594 adults from around the world completed the hajj. This year, 2.5 million are expected. Meanwhile, President Gloria-Macapagal Arroyo has appointed Maguindanao Gov. Datu Andal S. Ampatuan Sr. as this year's Amerol Hajj (Hajj leader) to head the Philippine hajj delegation.

## Moro youth calls for MNLF-MILF unity

BY GANDHI C. KINIYO

**SARANGANI:** More than 50 Young Moro Leaders from across the islands of Mindanao, Basilan, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi called for a unity among the ranks and files of the Moro National Liberation Front and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front in their quest to achieve self-determination of the Bangsamoro people.

The call through a resolution was the output from a 3-day gathering dubbed as "Mindanao Young Moro Leaders Conference" held at Isla Parilla resort, this town, on December 20 to 22. The event was aimed to get the unified position of the Moro youth to the GRP-MILF peace negotiation in their stance that they have a significant role to play in shaping the destiny of the Moro people and their homeland.

William Banzali, a young Kagan leader said, "There must be a leveling off among the leaders of the MNLF and MILF in the process of coordination and consultation."

"Islam calls for unity among Muslims, regardless of color, groups or nationality," he stressed. "Our goals for self-determination could not be realized, unless, we, Moro people are united," Naffesur-Rahman E. Suhod, from Tawi-tawi pointed out, adding, "our leaders should prove that they were once united and continuously united, as Islam mandates, for the sake of their Bangsamoro," said Norodin Piang, President of the Muslims Students Association in

Mindanao State University in General Santos City

Jocelyn Lambac, vice-president of the Young Moro Professionals Council -SOCSEKSAR-GEN, asked, "How can we prove to the world that we can stand on our own feet if there is disunity among the Moro people?"

In a related conference, the MILF was warned to be cautious of "language engineering in the peace talks. MNLF spokesman, Rev. Absalon Cervesa, during the 11<sup>th</sup> Bangsamoro Peoples Congress at Camp Nurbalam, Pikit, North Cotabato, on December 9, 2006, attended by more than 1,000 people.

Cervesa said the "provisional government" for the Bangsamoro, which the government should have implemented already as stipulated in the 1996 government-MNLF, was not realized, "instead it (government) gave the Bangsamoro people the Southern Philippine Council for Peace and Development (SPCPD), which had no power at all and was already dissolved."

The MNLF was organized in 1972 under the leadership of Prof. Nur Misuari in the height of the Martial Law during the stint of the late president Ferdinand Marcos. In 1983, Sheikh Salamat Hashim, vice-chairman of the MNLF then, separated from the mother organization and established the Moro Islamic Liberation Front. In 1996, the MNLF signed a peace agreement with the Philippine government. The MILF at present is negotiating with the government.

## The significance of Eid el-Adh'ha

EID EL-ADH'HA or the Feast of Sacrifice is one of the two feasts in Islam which Muslims worldwide are required to celebrate. The other one is Eid el-Fitr or the feast in celebration of the end of the fasting month of Ramadhan.

As we celebrate and commemorate this great day of sacrifice, each of us needs to look inwards, in self-retrospection, specially, at this moment of trial and tribulation. Islam and the Muslim world have been unjustly maligned and subjected to varied disinformation campaigns. Much as we wish to straighten these discriminations and misinformation, we cannot do so without looking inwards at our own misgivings, inadequacies, errors and misrepresentations of the pristine truth and purity of Islam. Indeed, there is a dire need for Muslims to look back into the glorious past of Islam. Muslims need to re-study Islam. If ever we are now put on trial, it is because a wide chasm has been created between what Islam is and how

### The Jihadist Hamid Aminoddin Barra

the Muslims interpret and practice Islam.

On this great day of sacrifice, we, Muslims, need to relearn our faith, to re-assess how we put to practice its injunction, and to do an honest and disciplined actualization of its teachings. We are the mirrors of Islam, and if ever Islam is maligned, misunderstood, misinterpreted or misjudged, we are to blame, first and foremost. Yes, before we blame others, let us examine ourselves!

A blessed Day of Sacrifice to you and the Muslim Community. *Eid Mubarak wa kullu aminin wa antum bikhayr!*

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*Dr. Barra's is a Professor with the Mindanao State University graduate program for Muslim Law. A practicing lawyer, he was the former Dean of the King Faizal Center for Arabic and Islamic Studies, MSU.*



## The Feast of the Sacrifice: The Hajj and Eid'l Adh'ha

BY HAMID AMINODDIN BARRA

THE Feast of Sacrifice falls on the tenth day of Dhu 'l-Hijjah, the month of the performance of *hajj* or pilgrimage to the Holy City of Makkah. (The Islamic calendar is lunar. According to the Gregorian calendar, Eid'l Adh'ha will be on January 10, 2007). It is in commemoration of the sacrifice undergone by the Prophet Ibrahim (pbuh) when he was commanded by Allah Almighty to build a house dedicated only to Him. Ibrahim dreamt that God asked him to sacrifice his only son, Ismail (pbuh), to test his sincerity. We read in the Glorious Qur'an: "And when his son (Ismail) was old enough to walk, he (Ibrahim) said: "O my son! I have seen in a dream that I am offering you as a sacrifice to Allah. So look what you think?" He said: "O my father! Do that which you are commanded, if Allah wills, you shall find me among the patient." *Al-Saffat 37:102*

Ibrahim, his wife, Hajar, and his son, Ismail, were all tempted

by the Devil not to heed to the Divine will. However, they remained steadfast in their submission to the Divine command for Ismail's sacrifice. Bringing Ismail to Mina, in the outskirts of Makkah, Ibrahim was about to cut his son's neck when the angels came and cried for God's mercy and clemency. The angels cried: *ALLAHU AKBAR, ALLAHU AKBAR, ALLAHU AKBAR!* (Allah is Greatest, Allah is Greatest, Allah is Greatest!).

Ismail, obedient to God's will, recited: *LA ILAHA ILLA 'LLAHU ALLAHU AKBAR!* (There is no deity worthy of worship except Allah and Allah is the Greatest!).

Then God Almighty caused a lamb to be placed in lieu of Ismail. Upon seeing that it was not his son but a lamb that was sacrificed, Ibrahim prayed in thankfulness and gratitude to God: *ALLAHU AKBAR WA LILLAHI 'L-HAMD!* (Allah is Greatest and to Allah belong all praises!).

In thankfulness, the angels

praised God: *ALLAHU AKBAR KABIRAH WA 'L-HAMDU LILLAHI KATHIRAH WA SUBHANAN ALAHI BUKRATAN WA ASILAH!* (Allah is greatest in His greatness, much praises are due to Him, and His is the glory, morning and evening!).

*Eid el-Adh'ha* is the culmination of the *hajj* or pilgrimage, one of the pillars of Islam. A Muslim is required to perform this form of worship at least once in a lifetime. Going on *hajj* is not only an exercise of devotion and submission to Allah Most High but also a participation in a universal gathering of Muslims coming from and representing all nations, tribes and races of the world. The international congregation in Makkah demonstrates the universality of Islam and the unity, brotherhood and solidarity of the Muslim Community. All dressed in immaculate white, the pilgrims confirm and renew their commitment to serve and worship only God

and accept only His sovereign will and power over them.

During the entirety of the *hajj*, men wear only two sheets of white cloth, worn like a sarong and shawl, while women wear a simple white dress and white veil. The white apparel signify the oneness and equality of the Muslims and the purity of their intention in the performance of this religious obligation. Indeed, the differences in the color of clothes of men manifest the inequality and distinctions of their material worth and political stature in life.

The pilgrims gather in the Holy Precincts or sites, performing the rituals of the *hajj*. They offer their sacrifice, commemorate and re-enact the historical and religious experiences of Ibrahim, Hajar and Ismail, and immerse themselves with the historical and spiritual environment of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). In the meantime, Muslims in all corners of the world share the ho-

liness, glory and grandeur of the day by equally commemorating *Eid el-Adh'ha* with prayers, remembrance of Allah, festivities and sacrifice. Muslims are encouraged to offer their sacrifice by slaughtering oblations (*qurban*), a goat for a household or a cow for seven households, to be distributed among the needy and the poor in the community.

One significant aspect of celebrating and remembering *Eid el-Adh'ha* is the commemoration of the last pilgrimage (*Hajjatu 'l-Wida'*) performed by the Holy Prophet Muhammad during his lifetime, nine year after his migration to Madinah. By then, his authority as religious and political leader of the Arabian peninsula was unchallenged and the Islamic community of Madinah was established on firm grounds. On this last pilgrimage, some eighty-two days before his death, He delivered his farewell sermon to the more than one hundred twenty thousand pilgrims. He spoke to them of the finality of the Is-

lamic message and the completeness of the Law he was commissioned to deliver. He then recited the last verse revealed of the Glorious Qur'an: "This day I have perfected your religion for you, completed My favor upon you, and have chosen for you ISLAM as a way of life." *Al-Ma'idah 5:3*

That final statement at the plains of Arafat was a sermon that reviewed the State of the *Ummah* or the Islamic Community. Hence, this is one aspect of the celebration and commemoration of this day that Muslims must strive for, when a leader acceptable to the Muslim world can stand before the millions of pilgrims in the plains of Arafat and assess the current situation of the *Ummah* and set action plans to make the Muslims live according to the Qur'anic injunction: "And We have made you a nation of the middle path that you may be witnesses unto mankind (of the truth of Islam) in the same manner that the Prophet was a witness unto you." *Al-Baqarah 2:143*

## Jesus and the Virgin Mary in the Qur'an

BY ALEEM AMRULLAH DIAMBANGAN

THE beautiful story of Maryam (Mary) and her son Isa (Jesus) is one of a kind, its uniqueness and extraordinariness related to us by Allah Almighty Himself in the Holy Qur'an. Their lives exemplified one of passion and devotion to God.

The holy Qur'an—the last scripture revealed by Allah—is a confirmation of all the books that He had sent before such as the Psalms (Zabur) sent to prophet David (Daud), the Torah (old testament) sent to prophet Moses

(Musa), and the Injil which was sent to prophet Jesus (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon them all).

The Qur'an relates how the mother of Mary offered the child in her belly in service to God, foreboding what was to become of the child: "O my Lord! I do Dedicate unto Thee what is in my womb for Thy special service." (Al-Imran:35)

Mary's mother was hoping at best for a boy because only boys could serve in the sanctuary, but when she gave birth to the child, it turned out a girl. She was a bit disappointed, but a pious woman she was, she turned her trust to Allah: "Right graciously did her Lord accept her. He made her grow in purity and beauty: to the care of Zacaria was she assigned. Every time that he entered (her) chamber to see her, He found her supplied with sustenance. He said: 'O Mary! Whence (comes) this to you?' She said: 'From God: for God Provides sustenance to whom He pleases, without measure.'" (Al-Imran: 37)

And Allah, the best of planners has further designs for the Virgin Mary. "Behold! The angels said: "O Mary! Giveth thee glad tidings of a Word from Him: his name will be Jesus, the son of Mary, held in honour in this world and the Hereafter and of (the company of) those nearest to God." (Al-Imran:45)

Mary was petrified: "'O my Lord! How shall I have a son when no mortal hath touched me?' He said: Even so: God createth what He willeth: When He hath decreed a Plan, He but saith to it, 'Be,' and it is!" (Al-Imran:47)

Allah said about Jesus in the Surah Al-Maryam verse 16 to 26, Allah will make him a sign for mankind and a mercy from him, "Mary conceived him, and she withdrew with him to a far place. When the pangs of child drove her to a trunk of a palm tree, she said "Oh, would that I have died before this and had become a thing

of naught forgotten! Then (one) cried to her below her saying, "Grieve not! Your lord has placed a rivulet beneath you. Shake the trunk of the palm tree toward you it will cause ripe dates to fall on you. So eat and drink and be consoled. If you meet any mortal, say: look! I have wooed a fast from Allah, and may not speak this day to any mortal."

After about forty days, Mary went back to her people with her child in her lap. Allah Almighty said: They (folks) said, "Oh Mary! You have come with an amazing thing! O sister of Harun! (Aaron) "Your father was not a wicked man nor was your mother a harlot." She (Maryam) pointed him. They said, "How can we talk to one who is in a cradle, a young boy?" "Jesus spoke out, "Look! I am the slave of Allah. He has given me the scripture and has appointed me prophet. He has made me blessed where so ever I may be, and has enjoined upon me prayers and alms giving so long as I remain alive. Allah has made me dutiful towards her who bore me, and has not made me arrogant, unblest." (Al-Maryam: 27 - 32)

Prophet Isa (Jesus) and his mother Mary were both humans, blessed by God and both obedient to their Lord. Both prayed together, fasted, and gave alms. Both ordained what was right and forbade what was wrong. Jesus in his second coming will join Muslims in their congregation and perform prayers after ablution, stand, bow and prostrate before Allah.

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### March for peace



Moro school children do their share in peace building by marching and singing. This activity helps counteract the recruitment of young people as child soldiers. PHOTO COURTESY OF HADER GLANG

# Happy Eid el-Adh'ha

From the staff of MoroTimes  
and Philippine Council for Islam and Democracy

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■ This is the first mosque and oldest Islamic landmark in the Philippines constructed at Bohe Indangan, Simunul, Tawi-Tawi in 1380 by then Sheikh Mackdum, an Arab missionary from the Middle East.

# Oldest mosque in Tawi Tawi declared a national shrine

BY HADER GLANG

ZAMBOANGA CITY: Muslim leaders in Mindanao hailed the Senate's declaration of the Sheikh Karimul Makhdum Mosque in Tawi-Tawi as a national shrine, saying it is a milestone in the Philippine history.

House deputy speaker for Mindanao Abdulgani "Gerry" Salapuddin said the move is a great honor and recognition to the Filipino Muslims, particularly to the people of Tawi-Tawi.

This symbolizes a great honor to the Islam faith," said Sultan of Sulu and North Borneo, Sharif Ibrahim Ajibul Mohammad Pulalun. "We are overjoyed by the recognition being given to the contribution of the Islamic faith to the country's history."

The Senate approved on third and final reading a bill authored by Senator Edgardo Angara declaring the Philippines' oldest mosque in recog-

niton to the contribution of Islam in the development of culture and civilization in the country.

Arabian missionary, scholar and judge, Sheikh Karimul Makhdum constructed the edifice in Tubig Indangan, Simunul, considered as the oldest structure and first mosque in the Philippines in AD 1380.

The Sheikh set foot in the island of Tubig Indangan 615 years ago, 140 years before the arrival of Magellan (the Spaniard who discovered the Philippines) in the Philippines. He introduced the first Islamic civilization in the country.

The mosque is held with

great esteem and emulation by the Muslims and even non-Muslims and is considered sacred. Domestic and foreign tourists frequently visit the mosque to pay respect and homage to the shrine.

The Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) through its Legislative Assembly has already passed a law declaring the inclusion of the Sheikh Makhdum centennial celebration as one of the Islamic events entitled to a special non-working holiday within the five provinces under the ARMM.

Sultan Pulalun appealed to Senator Angara that the mosque in Likup village in Indanan town in Jolo, Sulu be declared also as a national shrine being the country's second oldest mosque and because events of historical importance took place at the mosque.

He said at the height of Muslim rebellion against American colonial government, Muslim leaders met with General Leonard Wood at the mosque wherein historical talks and agreements were forged.

Pulalun, a descendant of Sultan Mohammad Pulalun, heads the Sultanate of Sulu and North Borneo, now Sabah. Sultanate of Sulu obtained Sabah from Brunei as a gift for helping put down a rebellion on the Borneo Island.

The Sultanate of Sulu was a Muslim state that ruled over much of the islands off the Sulu Sea. It stretches from a part of the island of Mindanao in the east, to North Borneo, now known as Sabah, in the west and south, and to Palawan, in the north. It was founded in 1457 and is believed to exist as a sovereign nation for at least 442 years.

## Making Projects Responsive to the Needs of ARMM

BY: PAT TULAWIE

THE management of ARMM Social Fund (ASFP), under the ARMM Regional Government since March 28, 2006 through Executive Order 518, was given a performance rating of satisfactory by the World Bank (WB). Snags hounded ASFP management, firstly when a WB funded infrastructure project that has already gone through the pre-implementation phase and originally meant for Datu Odin Sinsuat but was relocated to Shariff Aguak causing delay and additional costs, and secondly when its project manager, Atty. Arnel Datukon, was assassinated. But these appear to have minimal effect and have only slightly impeded its over-all implementation. ASFP has continually carried on realizing its goals and objectives.

The ASFP, funded by WB or International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) and JBIC has continued to implement the different components of the project customized to the needs of the ARMM constituents. Loans amounting to \$33.6 million from IBRD and ¥2.47 billion from JBIC are the fund source for the Community Development and Assistance (CDA), Strategic Regional Infrastructure (SRI) and Institutional Strengthening and Governance (ISG) projects. These started in 2003 and set to be completed in 2007 for IBRD funded projects and 2010 for JBIC funded.

The ASFP aims for a sustainable development in the ARMM conflicted areas by bringing down poverty. Its methods are entrenched on a transparent, participatory and criteria-based selection process. Communities have the direct opportunity to participate in all phases of the project which brings forth projects that are responsive to the real and felt needs of the communities. ASFP gives these communities the technical know-how to successfully implement the projects with supports

from Line Agencies, Local Government Units, NGOs and the media.

The CDA, one of the major projects of ASFP, has touched so many lives in the ARMM conflict areas. It has given back the lives of the people by promoting community empowerment. It has bridged peace and has elevated the lives in the target areas through its capacity building, infrastructure and livelihood activities. It also made its mark on Internally Displaced Persons through its "Quick Response Program". The CDA projects cover all ARMM municipalities and Marawi City. About 500 to 600 barangays are funded by IBRD and another 200 barangays are funded by JBIC.

ASFP has also identified key areas wherein to implement its infrastructure projects designed to connect the geographically divided ARMM thereby providing a solid base for socio-economic development, build and/or improve the health care facilities, and provide training ground for the stakeholders of ARMM. Ten of the thirteen SRI projects funded by IBRD are completed, two are on-going and the last one is under review. Moreover, another seven of the thirty three SRI projects funded by JBIC are about to be implemented.

ASFP has covered all significant grounds for development. Another one of its projects is the development of the educational system and governance of ARMM. The ISG projects include information, education and communication, Community-Based Education (CBE) and project management. The collaboration with BEAM and Dep-ED brought forward the implementation of several projects in Basilan, Marawi, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi. Additionally, ASFP has supported 17 private madaris for Dep-Ed accreditation. It helped in the conduct of Modarriseen (Teachers' Training Series 2 and developed instructional materials for language learning/teaching in the Madrasah.

## Giving Peace an elbow room: PCID launches Iribani's book

BY NASSER SHARIEF

PEOPLE keep asking whatever happened to the Final Peace Agreement signed ten years ago between the government and the Moro National Liberation Front. Two men walked away each with a Peace award, but one of the two languishes in jail for no conclusive reason—or house arrest if that makes you feel better. The PCID's publishing this December of Abraham Iribani's book *Give Peace a Chance* could not have come at a better time then. Before the manuscript for which the book had been based could be relegated into the oblivion of the archives which has little chance of reaching the public, PCID, the Magbassa Kita Foundation and the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung had joined forces to publish the book because they realized that it is a very important addition in chronicling the events leading to the signing of the peace pact.

In a simple cocktail at the Asian Institute of Management, the book was unveiled before the public. In attendance were journalists, foreign diplomats and members of civil society groups.

The late Abet Iribani was the spokesperson of the MNLF during the Peace Process leading to the 1996 Peace Agreement and was also the co-founder of PCID. His book, according to Ms. Amina Rasul-Bernardo, the PCID lead convenor; "with its honest analyses and faithful documentation of the pur-



■ Amina Rasul, Lead Convenor of the Philippine Council for Islam and Democracy hands over a copy of Abraham Iribani's book "Give Peace a Chance" to Atty. Jose Lorena who receives it on behalf of the Iribani family in a simple ceremony at the Asian Institute of Management in Makati City. Loking on are Ismael Abubakar, Samira Gutoc, Atty. Nasser Marohomsalic, Klaus Preschle, Haroum Al-Rachid and Dr. Mashur Bin-Ghalib Jundam. PHOTO COURTESY PCID

poses and intentions behind the 1996 FPA, shall serve as a reminder of how difficult and rewarding peace building is." Dr. Klaus Preschle of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation expressed the group's ob-

jectives in publishing the book: "we want to honor a friend" and for everyone interested in the peace process, there are so much to gain from the book.

Paying their tributes to the

author were Atty. Nasser Marohomsalic, chair the Muslim Legal Assistance Foundation; Hon. Ismael Abubakar, Jr.; and Dr. Mashur Bin-Ghalib Jundam, dean of the U.P. Institute of Islamic Studies. Speak-

ing in behalf of the Iribani family was Atty. Jose Lorena, executive director of the Muslim Mayors' League and a cousin of the author. Mr. Bart Guingona of the Pagbabago Movement was the Master of Ceremony.

Atty. Marohomsalic declared in his tribute that "the book is a cut by itself beyond the usual pasticcis in research work. The narrative is vastly drawn from Abet's personal experiences. And the truth of his personal knowledge is confirmed in documents extant in the records of the peace talks and by the events that unfolded after the signing of the Peace Agreement in September 1996."

