

# The Moro Times

FRIDAY  
January 26, 2007

## ■ Lifetime achievement



Congressman Francis "Chiz" Escudero joins PCID convenors Amina Rasul, Nasser Marohomsalic and Filemon Romero in awarding a plaque of appreciation to National Artist Abdul Mari Imao for his accomplishments as the first Moro National Artist.

# GRP, MILF hopeful in 2007

## More breakthroughs expected in peace negotiations

BY GANDHI C. KINJIYO

GENERAL SANTOS CITY: The Government of the Republic of the Philippines and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) have expressed confidence that year 2007 will usher in more positive results in the ongoing peace process, particularly on the agreement on the general cessation of hostilities. This was the joint statement of Brig. Gen. Edgardo Gurra and Von Al Haq, chairmen of the Coordinating Committee on the Cessation of Hostilities (CCCH) of the GRP and MILF, respectively, during the Joint GRP-MILF CCCH meeting held at East Asia Royal Hotel, this city on Jan. 9-10.

Faithful observance of the ceasefire by both parties had significantly contributed to the enhancement of peace, se-

curity and economy the two said in a joint statement. "The importance of upholding the primacy of the peace process is such that its highest interest must prevail over all other things."

Among the 30 issues discussed were to enhance further the coordination between the GRP CCCH and the MILF CCCH in strengthening the ceasefire mechanisms on the ground, strengthening peace and ceasefire advocacy drives through the various media, maximizing engagements

with the civil society groups and local government units, and avoiding malicious and provocative statements that would tend to undermine the ceasefire and the peace process as a whole.

The MILF CCCH clarified that Basit Usman, who is accused of the recent spate of bombings in Central Mindanao, is not a member of the MILF and gave assurance that the said person is not being protected by the MILF. The MILF also denied any involvement in the reported

rescue of a certain Badrudin from his detention cell from Maguindanao Provincial Jail.

General Santos City Mayor Acharon, stressed that the political identity of the Bangsamoro has to be squarely addressed in addition to the conditions of poverty and discrimination that pervade the region. Acharon emphasized that creative approaches and proper consultation with all the stakeholders are crucial in forging an enduring and just solution to Mindanao's problems.

## ■ Moro leaders on US Iraq policy

The Philippine Council for Islam and Democracy (PCID), the University of the Philippines-Institute of Islamic Studies (UP-IIS) and The Asia Foundation (TAF) are organizing a roundtable discussion on "The American Policy in the Middle East and Its Implications on the Islamic Ummah". The forum, to be held today at the Institute of Islamic Studies in the University of the Philippines Diliman, aims to foster an enlightened discussion on the possible ramifications of the transformations and developments in the Middle East might have on the global Ummah and the "Mindanao problem". Dr. Zachary Abuza, currently a Senior Fellow at the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) and Associate Professor of Political Science at Simmons College; and Dr. Julkipli Wadi, a Professor of Islamic Studies at the University of the Philippines will be speaking at the forum.

The event will also serve as a venue for the launching of Dr. Hadji Mashur Bin-Ghalib Jundam's book, *Tunggal Hulah-Duwah Sarah: Adat and Shareeah Laws in the Life of the Tausug*. "Kah Max", as the author is fondly called, is a PCID fellow and is currently the Dean of the Institute of Islamic Studies, University of the Philippines, Diliman. He earned his master's degree (Asian Studies) and obtained his doctorate in Philosophy from said university after his BSEED course where he graduated magna cum laude from the Notre Dame of Jolo College in Sulu. He also served as SPCPD-ARMM Policy Adviser on Educational Affairs in 1998.

His book, according to Manaros Boransing, Under-secretary for Muslim Affairs of the Department of Education "has a trifold contribution: First, it educates more fully the non-Muslims about Islam as a religion and a way of life. Second, the Muslims will enhance their knowledge about the values and belief system of Islam. Lastly and most important, this book can help facilitate the building of bridge between and among people of varied religious affiliations and cultural upbringing."

Amy Malbun, Assistant Regional Director, Region XII of the Department of Education recommends the book "not only to students of law, but to all knowledge seekers and laity of all ages and walks of life—including teachers and their students."

## Moro leaders condemn the spate of bombings in Mindanao

BY GANDHI C. KINJIYO

GENERAL SANTOS CITY: Moro traditional leaders, including religious and youth leaders from different parts of Mindanao have condemned the bombings in General Santos, branding the perpetrators evil, barbaric, inhuman and people without religion. They also urged authorities to consider other angles like politics, sabotage to the peace in the investigation considering that the Moro are made usual suspects of bomb-

ing incidences.

"Our organization condemns the bombings which [are] act[s] of evil people. We must consider also that there exist groups [which] do not want the ongoing peace process (GRP-MILF) to succeed and the election is fast approaching", said Abdul Mutalib Esmal, president of the group, Sulu-Basilan-Tawitawi Umpukan in General Santos City, an organization of Yakans and Tausugs in this city.

Salem Demuna from Davao del Norte, a Kaagan tribe youth leader,

described the incident as a justification of the presence of terrorists. Demuna chairs the Learned Kaagan Foundation in Davao del Norte.

Sheikh Abdulbayan Lagui-alam, Chairman of the Muslim Supreme Council for Religious Affairs in this city, said they also condemned the killing of innocents. Lagui-alam said that whoever kills an innocent, it is as if he wages war against the Almighty.

Hajji Usman Mudsol of the Sarangani PNP-Salam Council (SPNPSC), said those who did that are merciless people without religion. SPNPSC is organization of Moro leaders

which support the provincial police in the maintenance of peace in the province.

The spokesperson of the Bangsamoro Center for Just Peace in the Philippines based in Cotabato City, William Banzali, said he hoped that the spate of bombings won't affect the ongoing peace talks between the GRP and the MILF.

Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) National Coordinator Hajji Gapol Hajirul said the MNLF has condemned whoever are behind the recent spate of bombings.

The Sugoda Buayan Royal House (SBRH) called the

bombers as people who do not respect even themselves.

"Despite all this atrocities, let's remain sober and continue to trust each other, regardless of our religion or beliefs," said Raja Muda Alimudin Hassan, head of SBRH.

Six persons died and 34 others were injured when a bomb exploded at the outlet of a national online lottery at the edge of Santiago Boulevard, outside the public market here. An artist's sketch of the suspect was released yesterday and described the suspect as between 5'7 to 5'8 tall man of medium built with an estimated age of 28 to 30 year old.



## Moro lady to get *Voices of Courage* award in New York

BY NASSER SHARIEF

MS. NORAIIDA ADANG ABDULLAH KARIM of Maguindanao has been named recipient of the "Voices of Courage" Award to be given by the *Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children* at an awards luncheon in New York City to be held on May 10 this year. The "Voices of Courage" awards are presented each year to deserving persons or organizations from around the world that have shown commitment and leadership to promote the well-being of displaced women, children, and youth.

In addition to the award, Noraida will have the privilege of delivering the keynote address of the event. This will enable her to air her advocacy efforts on behalf of women, children, and youth in the conflict-ridden areas of Mindanao.

Noraida was born in Cotabato City in 1970, a year before Martial Law was declared and spent her formative years in Datu Piang in Maguindanao, Philippines. Her childhood and youth were marked by poverty, repeatedly displaced due to the intermittent wars. But her determination to survive saved her the day and those around her.

An indifatigable social worker, Noraida modestly started her social work with CFSI in March 2001 as Community Organizing Officer, helping large numbers of internally displaced persons return to their communities of origin and begin rebuilding. She subsequently played a leading role in the Literacy, Livelihood, and Food Sufficiency Project for women and male youth that Community and Family Services International (CFSI) field-tested

for the World Bank. Noraida then formed the "Arms are for Hugging Project" that has helped ensure over 600 formerly out-of-school children and youth have access to primary education in their own community in Inug-ug, Pagalungan, Maguindanao.

Noraida is Officer-in-Charge of CFSI operations in Mindanao and Coordinator of the Food Assistance Project that CFSI in partnership with the World Food Programme (WFP) is carrying out in the war-torn communities in Maguindanao. All those who have Noraida in action could not help being impressed by her zeal and her desire to work for the safety and well-being of many disadvantaged people. Her hard work, strength of character, courage, and humility is paying dividends to her people.



# Iraq: There is a Third Way

## The Jihadist Muqtedar Khan

Dr. Muqtedar Khan is Assistant Professor at the University of Delaware. He is a Non-resident Fellow at the Brookings Institution. He is the author of *American Muslims: Bridging Faith and Freedom, Jihad for Jerusalem: Identity and Strategy in International Relations*.

IRAQ is a man-made disaster. According to the UN, 6000 Iraqi civilians were killed in July and August of 2006. In September so far over 66 American soldiers have been killed. In 2006 nearly 20,000 Iraqi civilians and security forces have perished. The status quo in Iraq is unacceptable; Iraq is slowly and steadily becoming a horrendous humanitarian tragedy.

In addition to the loss of human life in Iraq, a leaked National Intelligence Estimate prepared in April 2006 by 16 American intelligence agencies asserts that US invasion of Iraq has become the single most important reason for the growth and expansion of Al Qaeda and Jihadism worldwide, increasing terror and making the world less secure.

Amidst mounting criticism of his Iraq policy, President Bush denies that his adventure in Iraq is a failure. He claims that we are winning in Iraq and also warns that unless we stay the course we will lose the war on terror. Iraq in his opinion is the key to winning the war on terror.

But the American people are foxed no more. They are beginning to come out of the spin zone.

The unending and unrelenting stream of bad news from Iraq is finally sapping the American will to fight a war of choice. The recent victory of Ned Lamont over Joe Lieberman in the Senate primaries in Connecticut has served as a signal that public opinion in America has changed with regards to Iraq and the coming elections in November may very well become a referendum on whether America should 'stay the course' in Iraq.

Recent polls by NY Times, CBS and CNN indicate that nearly two-thirds of Americans [62%] believe that things were going badly in Iraq. Now, 51% believe that there is no relationship between Iraq and the war on terror. This is a significant shift since June 2006 when only 41% believed that Iraq had no connection with the war on terror. Nearly 82% Americans indicate that Iraq will play a very important role in their voting decision in November and 59% of those polled oppose US war in Iraq.

There are now two reasons why there will be increased public opposition to continued U.S. presence in Iraq. The first reason is the specter of American failure to achieve its goals in Iraq; a world without terrorism and a Middle East without dictatorship. There is a limit to how long Americans can con-

tinue to support failure and watch thousands die on a daily basis. The second reason is the growing realization that there was no linkage between the war in Iraq and the war on terror. While Americans do want to win the war on terror —there is no other option on that score; they may not wish to continue to lose in a war, which was optional to begin with.

So far there are two plans for Iraq on the table: the President's plan to stay the course, and the demand by some Democrats such as Pennsylvania Congressman John Murtha, to schedule an early withdrawal. In my opinion neither plan truly safeguard's America's security interests.

While invading Iraq was wrong on many levels, withdrawing from Iraq will not solve the problem; on the contrary it will only compound the dilemma. A precipitous American departure will lead to a full-blown civil war with more bloodshed in Iraq, which will destabilize the Middle East and undermine oil supplies. It will also embolden the radical forces in the region, who will interpret U.S. retreat as a U.S. defeat. It will inspire them to do more and will attract more recruits, garner more support and perhaps launch more ambitious projects in the region and elsewhere.

In the long run a failed state in Iraq may very well enable the emergence of territorial pockets under radical control that could become bases for Al Qaeda and its mimics that could threaten U.S. interests across the region and also subvert European security more aggressively. These groups also bring death, destruction, and destabilization to Muslim societies wherever they operate from. Clearly it is in nobody's interests to see radicalism thrive in the Muslim World.

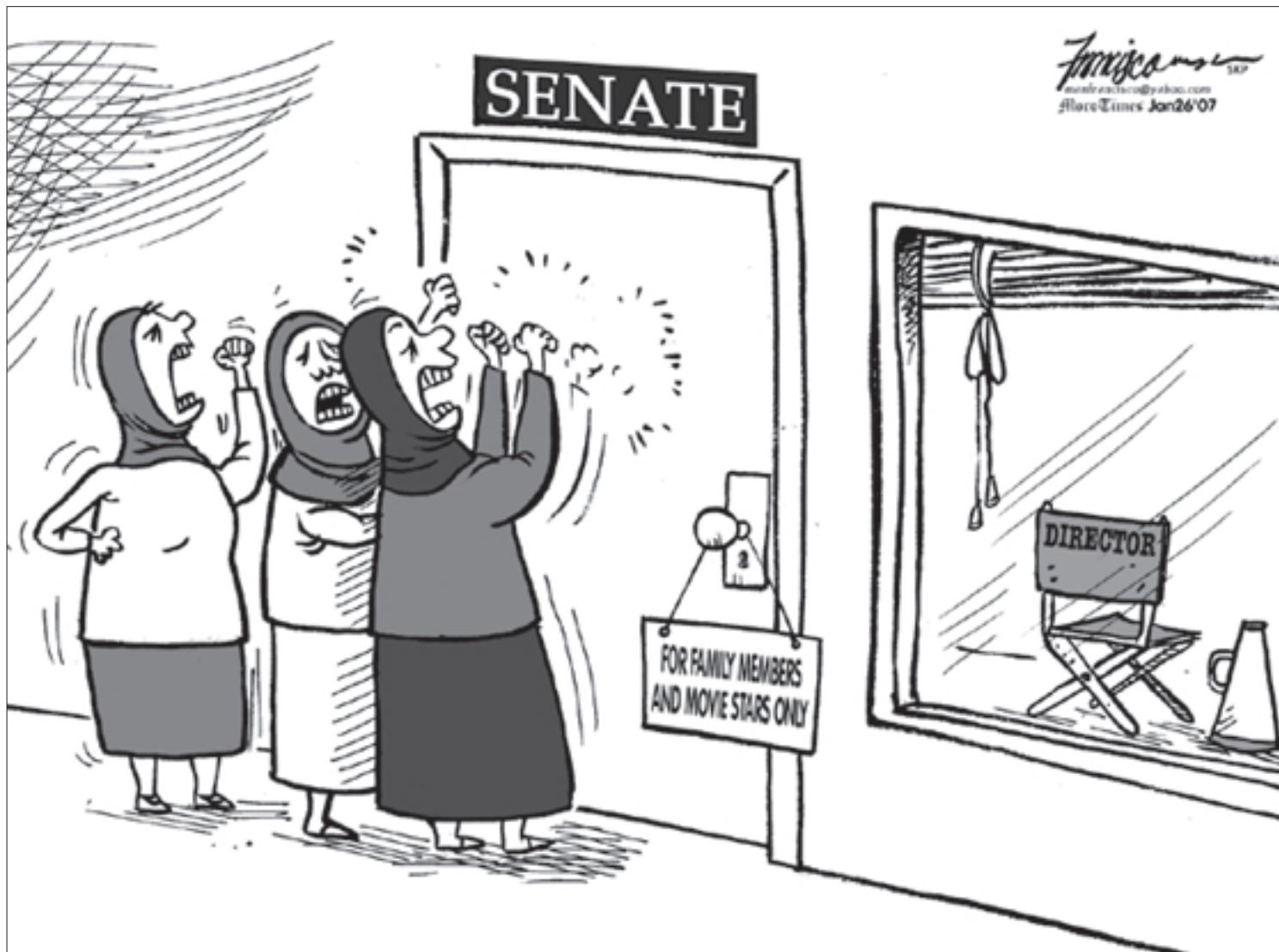
The US cannot stay the failed course in Iraq, it's a travesty, and it cannot withdraw immediately. Both will lead to catastrophe, only on a different time table. We desperately need a third way.

The key problem in Iraq is really the inability of the U.S. to put more boots on the ground to patrol every street and every nook and corner in Baghdad. Security in Baghdad is the first step to peace and stability in Iraq. Also the visibility of U.S. occupation incites more anger and violence and also to some extent justifies the insurgency. The U.S. can perhaps diffuse problem by Muslimizing the occupation of Iraq, by demanding key Arab and Muslim allies to provide the necessary additional troops.

This year alone we will be paying Egypt \$1.8 Billion in military and economic aid, Jordan \$468 million in economic and security aid, Pakistan \$370 million in military assistance, Indonesia \$75 million in military and economic aid. Why can't these countries provide 50,000 troops collectively to patrol Baghdad and save Muslim lives? How can the Muslim World simply stand by and watch a Muslim nation implode without stepping forward to help?

Perhaps U.S. bravado and ascendant unilateralism has kept them away until now. But everyone can now see how desperate things are. The U.S. desperately needs help and its Muslim friends must be made to come forward. It is time for the U.S. to call in some favors; a quick workshop in humility for the White House staff may help kick start the process.

The failure of the Bush administration to acknowledge that it has committed gross errors in its vision as well as in its strategy and execution of the Iraq invasion, is forcing the American public to choose between a losing strategy and defeat. It is time for the President to be more honest, to acknowledge his mistakes and seek fresh ideas to resolve the crisis.



## Intellectual Community endorses Moro Times

I look at The Moro Times as the light at the end of the tunnel for the Muslims in the Philippines, who apart from being the most deprived, are misunderstood. After the Sept. 11 tragedy, the misconceptions have worsened, a new mindset developed that a Muslim is guilty unless proven innocent. The Moro Times could shed light on the real picture of the Muslim community.—**Bai Nurhata Alonto, Former Presidential Adviser for Muslim Affairs**

It is in reading that a generation of new mumin, believers, are prepared and well-equipped to understand Islamic values, Islamic civilization and Western schools of thought and enhance their participation in interfaith dialogue.—**Usec. Manaros Boransing, Department of Education**

The Moro Times is a venue for Moro voices.—**Sec. Ishak Mastura, Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) -ARMM**

The Moro Times is a welcome development which needs support from the Moro people. On the other hand, the Moro Times must maintain good and balanced information for the public.—**Atty. Guialil Kanda, OMA-SOCSARGEN Field Director**

I invite the Filipino people, the Moros in particular, to read the Moro Times to enrich themselves on information about

Muslims and Islam.—**Atty. Rex Panumpang, Greenhills Muslim Businessmen Association, Virra Mall, Muslim Legal Assistance Foundation**

I always look forward to every last Friday of the month's issue of Moro Times. I wish there are more pages.—**Dr. Zenaida Pangandaman-Gania, Director, Mindanao State University Information Office, Manila**

## Opinions: should political parties include a Muslim in their senatorial slate?

YES, we must have one Muslim senator to protect and work for Muslim interest and policy.—**Nurmallah Alonto Lucman, Former Vice Governor, Lanao del Sur**

"All parties should have a Muslim senatorial candidate. A Muslim senator like former Senator Santanina Rasul would be a crucial element of government to address the problems in the South."—**Fatima Evangelista, Davao**

"Sadly we don't have the stature and talent, and ominously no money to run a grueling nationwide campaign. The government is not Muslim-friendly."—**Nurudin Lucman, Author, Moro Archives**

"If winnability is the only criteria, then only millionaires (or toadies of taipans, jueteng and gaming lords and druglords) and celebrities would be viable candidates."—**Hadja Salma, Maryland**

"Yes. But we should have only ONE that will be supported by the majority. It is useless to field many Muslim candidates because we will never win if we are divided."—**Sulu IT Solution Provider**

"Good way to expand the awareness of Filipino people for the existence of Bangsamoro—its right for equal representation in government. Open and free venue to express in the broad spectrum of Philippines society Bangsamoro Agenda."—**Dinn, Singapore** Muslim candidates can only win national elections if block voting is adopted again just like in the past or if the senate representation is selected by some politicians who advocates the federal form of government in our country."—**Yasiribba**

"I'd say, why not? If he meets the criteria of a true (and I mean true) Muslim leader then May Allah swt support him."—**Fatima Jajurie, Jolo**

"We Muslims should first unite and we must remove the tribalism mentality. Why should our Christian brothers and sisters consider us in their senatorial slate when we Muslims do not even bother to vote for our candidate for the Senate. Even in the selection for the 12 slots for senate ruled by Christian majority, when they selected a Muslim for their senatorial slate, the first to oppose was a Muslim."—**Alkarim, Jolo**

"We need more economic reforms rather than political. Since I was born, power in politics has shifted from one hand to other. There is still no food on the table for our Muslim brothers back home. We need more entrepreneurs to boost and propel business activities in grass root level and employ people. Economic activity puts food in the table. Politicians merely fatten their belly. Representation in the Senate means nothing to poor Muslim families who cannot even provide 'maggi' for dinner."—**Raja Sulaiman Arbison Loong, Singapore**

"All political parties should have a Muslim senatorial. We are 10% of the nation (more than 6 million Muslims). Political parties can help Muslim senatorial win, if they want to. Why should Muslims participate in the Philippine national election when the majority does not consider us part of their nation?"—**Yusuf Abdullah, MetroManila**

"It's up with the political parties. We are all Filipinos, anyway. As long as the Senators holding offices are doing their responsibilities as elected officials I am not bothered if there are no Muslims elected as Sena-

tors."—**Malik Achmad D. Arani, Munai, Lanao del Norte**

"We need quality representation that can make a difference in policy and program as far as Bangsamoro issue is concerned, not just symbolic."—**Abhoud Lingga, Institute of Bangsamoro Studies**

"The real issue is for major political parties to include one or two from minority nations in their senatorial slate... It is not a question of 'winnables' though politicians think that way... The real crux of the matter is for major political parties to set the example of what people called the 'politics of inclusion'.

"Both the administration and opposition parties must show the way... by including in their slate one Moro and one IP in their respective slate... It is NOT simply for the sake of accommodation... but a powerful symbol that these major parties believe in the politics of inclusion..."—**Eliseo "Jun" Mercado, OMI**

"Muslim intellectuals have more important things to do than running for the senate. After all man in Islam implement laws (Shariah), they don't make them."—**Cabaybay Abubakar, Cotabato City**

## [ MUSLIMS ACROSS THE NATION ]

### BY SAMIRA GUTOC

**COTABATO CITY:** ARMM Regional Governor Datu Zaldy Uy Ampatuan appointed Hadja Salama "Kadigua" A. Ampatuan as chairperson the Regional Commission on the Bangsamoro Women (RCBW). She said, her office will conduct consultation with the people especially the sector of women, mothers and children who are victims of the conflict in the region. Chairperson Hadja Salama

A. Ampatuan of the RCBW-ARMM replaced Tarhata Ampatuan who was appointed in 2005.

The Institute of Bangsamoro Studies and Muslim Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Kutawato, Inc. launched a series of fora on Sustaining the Peace Process starting on January 3, 2007 on the topic, "Updates on the GRP-MILF Negotiations" by Mohagher Iqbal, Chairman of the MILF Negotiating Panel at the Kadtuntaya Training Center, Cotabato City

The Office on Muslim Affairs recently met the National Bureau of Investigation-Quezon City and Philippine National Police and QC Government to coordinate and address "hulidap" operations of Muslim businessmen. OMA Chief of Legal Division Rahana Ganda also said they have filed a complaint before the NBI on the salvaging of a Maranao boy detained for theft at the QC police headquarters. According to Ganda, the police said they released the boy and his enemies

probably killed him.

The Philippine Muslim Women Council convened its second Bi-Annual Assembly with the theme, "Muslim Women Stewards: Standing up as On"e on Jan. 13-14 at Manican Hall, Marawi City. The assembly agreed to prioritize advocacy on poverty reduction, entrepreneurship, Lake Lanao rehabilitation and development and women's role in Islam. The plight of jailed Muslim women detainees in Luzon was also raised.

**AMON JADEED**  
1427 hegira

**WELCOME HOME**  
Hajj 2007

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■ REVENUES From page D4

## Mustapha Gandarosa: Raking in revenues

"A war was brewing in the south during the formative years of the rebellion. Many Moro students went home, abandoning their studies to join the rebellion against the government. The massacres of Muslims had led many into disillusionment." Pressed by friends to join the rebellion, he finally decided to help his people by staying in the system and changing it from within. "So together with a few friends, as a token of a passing of an era and the ushering of a new one, before they brought in the 105mm mortars, I and my *barkadas* rounded the towns around the lake on a rickety jeep."

"I am more of a planner, making things happen on a large scale than a pussyfooting soldier," Muss said. He felt that he would better serve his people by helping with their economic development. "After all, following the lead of the Prophet of Islam, he was a trader in the caravansary."

Muss Gandarosa had worked with banks, private companies, and even taught at various colleges in the South before he joined the Bureau of Internal Revenue. A top performer, he was chosen to open the BIR office in Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. "The BIR Commissioner felt that I was the right person to open a BIR office in the Middle East over 13 contenders." When Muss ended his term as Internal Revenue Attache for the Middle East and Africa, he had helped pour in a total of \$61 million to the coffers of the Philippine government.

In 1998, Muss resettled in Manila. "To be a revenue officer is a very trying task, full of pitfalls and not for the faint-hearted," Gandarosa concedes. Appointed to head the BIR Revenue Region 16 office, Muss has ticked off influential government officials with his single-minded focus on increasing tax collections. In spite of political attacks from these officials, Muss remains steadfast.

A practicing Muslim, he strictly adheres to the injunctions of his faith. "I've been receiving tokens of appreciations from everyone, especially imported liquors. My housemaid cringes whenever she watches me pour the content of a blue label Johnnie Walker down the sink. She would plead that I give it to her for her uncles. But I believe that the distiller, the warehouse man, the delivery man, the middle man, the wholesaler, the peddler and the ultimate consumer are all part of a chain of culpability. I'm not a perfect Muslim, hey, but I try the best I can be."

"Do good and the reward will be from Me," Muss loves to quote from the Qur'an. "I want to touch as many people as I can," he said. Thus, he did not confine his job only to his office. He was active in the community. The late Abraham Rasul, then Ambassador to Saudi Arabia remarked that Muss "has an exemplary record in public relations with the overseas contract workers in the Kingdom and their employers." Long after Muss had packed up and left, the Philippine embassy still receives cards from people whose lives Muss had changed for the better. A letter from a certain Rommelie and Estelita Castillo of Antopol Rizal reads: "*Siguro po kung hindi galing sa inyo wala pa po si Mama dito (sa Pilipinas)...nagpapasalamat kami sa Panginoon na nakilala namin ang isang katulad ninyo.*" (Were it not for you, perhaps Mama would not have been back to Philippines. . . We thank God that we've come to know you.) A colleague, Gilbert Jose of Citibank in Turkey, wrote that he "was sad that a good man will be leaving the region. . . You have achieved a lot during your 12 years in the Middle East."

A true servant of the Filipino people, Gandarosa achieved the Gold Pin from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Emirate of Kuwait for his service during the 1990 Gulf War.

# Engaging Muslim minority communities in Canada

BY AMBASSADOR PETER SUTHERLAND, EMBASSY OF CANADA

AS Canada's Ambassador to the Philippines, I have often been struck by the similarities between our two countries. Time and again, I note linkages which no doubt form the basis of our strong relations.

One such linkage is the fact that both of our countries face the challenge of engaging our Muslim minority communities in a way that assures inclusion and enfranchisement without diminishing the unique identity of the communities. This is a fine balance to maintain, made possible through mutual respect.

The relationship is continually evolving, as the demographics of Canada's wider population and its Muslim minority communities undergo constant change. With this in mind, let me outline the role played by Canadian Muslims in the past and present, as well as the impact of Canada's multiculturalism policy.

### History and Demographics

Muslims have been present in Canada for some 150 years. The earliest official record of Muslims in Canada is from 1871, but recorded history traces Muslim presence in Canada to the mid-19th century.

The numbers of new Canadians arriving remained fairly

small until the end of the Second World War. The remnants of race-based immigration restrictions were lifted in the 1960s, and the last four decades have seen substantial growth in quantity and diversity of origins.

The population of Muslims in Canada doubled in the period between the national censuses of 1991 and 2001. The 2001 census data on religious affiliation put Canadian Muslims at 579,600, which represented 2% of the country's population. This percentage will likely continue to grow due to sustained immigration flows from majority Muslim countries.

### The Current Context

Contemporary Canadian Muslims tend to be highly educated. Research has shown that at the university level, the percentage of Muslims is twice as high as that of other immigrants and close to three times as high as the total Canadian population.

A number of Canadian Muslims have demonstrated that

the country offers them upward mobility in various spheres of life. They have succeeded in business enterprise, civil society institutions, media, academia, and government.

Muslims have been elected to federal and provincial parliaments in Canada, and numerous Muslims work in Canada's public service—both at the federal and provincial level.

There is also Muslim presence in Canadian media, including print, radio and television outlets, as well as on-line media. Muslims have served on the staff and editorial boards of major urban newspapers and several Muslims programs run on religious and ethnic TV channels. Media is an increasingly popular area of concentration for young Canadian Muslims.

Canadian Muslims are represented by a variety of groups and organizations, some that have a religious or ethnic focus, and others that are primarily issue-driven. The plurality of associations indicates that there is no monolithic voice that speaks for all Muslims.

### Canadian Muslims and Multiculturalism

Canada's particular model of multiculturalism appears to

have aided such integration of Muslims into the public sphere.

Canada was the first country to institute an official policy of multiculturalism and is the only one to have a law recognizing the cultural diversity of its population. The federal government announced the adoption of the multiculturalism policy in 1971, and eventually a law on multiculturalism in 1988.

The goal of the legislation is to preserve and enhance multiculturalism in the country. It recognizes the diversity of Canadians as regards race, national or ethnic origin, colour, and religion as a fundamental characteristic of Canadian society and specifically cites the obligations of federal institutions to enhance the ability of all Canadians to contribute to the growth of the country.

Muslim activities supported by the federal multiculturalism program have included organizational development, conferences, citizenship enhancement, youth leadership development, exhibitions, teacher training, and the teaching of minority languages including Urdu, Arabic, and Farsi.

Canadian Muslims have used a variety of existing legal instruments in the effort

to secure rights in Canada. Human rights legislation has enabled members of the community to make some gains, for example, obtaining time off for religious practice from places of employment.

### Canada in the Philippines

As noted earlier, Canada's relationship with its Muslim minority communities continues to evolve and new issues are constantly brought forward. At present, for instance, discussions on the application of Sharia law in Canada have proved divisive, both within the Muslim community and in society at large. While there's no promise of an easy solution, there's commitment to dialogue and maintaining the respect that underlines the relationship.

Given this experience engaging its own Muslim minority community, Canada sees an opportunity to play a helpful role in the Philippines. We are active in Mindanao, expending significant resources as we are sincere in our resolve to contribute to peace, stability and development in the region. A follow-up article next month will demonstrate this resolve by profiling Canada's activities in Mindanao.

## Will killing terrorists kill terrorism?

BY AMINA RASUL

HAPPY *Amon Jadeed!* Muslims around the world marked the start of our new year on 1 Muharram 1428 AH (equivalent to January 20, 2007).

Friends and family send greetings through e-mail and text, asking for forgiveness for whatever offenses they may have caused, wishing for Allah's blessings. Our New Year celebrations are very low key, in comparison to January 1. I decided to group the theme of the messages sent to me. An overwhelming number (55 out of 70) wished for peace and God's forgiveness. The rest wished me joy and happiness. Subconsciously, my Muslim brothers and sisters are still hoping, in the midst of the turmoil we live in, that peace will come. A just peace, not just the absence of violence.

In Sulu, we have neither just peace nor the absence of vio-

lence. To be fair, the military has to be congratulated for their success in decimating the leadership of the Abu Sayyaf. A few days ago, the military reported that Abu Sulayman and nine ASG members were killed in the ongoing operation on Jolo Island. The operations started in August last year. (ASG leader Janjalani was supposed to have been killed earlier.)

### Oppressive poverty

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said, "This shows that government operations against the Abu Sayyaf group is successful ... They continue to be weakened. We are succeeding in our counter-insurgency operations."

I hope so. The ASG, in an environment marked by oppressive poverty and inequity, is like the hydra: cut off one head and another will surface. The heads grow, fed by the desperation felt by the communi-

ties, burdened by collateral damage from the ongoing military operations.

Secretary Ed, General Esperon: if you truly want to eliminate terrorist threats, you would do well to insist on the implementation of development and antipoverty programs in the areas of conflict. If you want the hydra monster to weaken and die, make sure your troops are well trained in dealing with civilians and not treat them as the enemy. If you want the communities to fight terrorism, give them something to fight for. As it is, what do we have to fight for?

### Rido now the norm

Ten years after the signing of the 1996 Peace Agreement with the Moro National Liberation Front, Sulu is as poor as it was before. Violence is increasing. The major source of armed conflicts is no longer insurgents versus state. We have violence due to smuggling, narco-poli-

tics and your garden variety criminality. In the absence of rule of law, we have rule of the lawless. Those who would seek justice no longer go to courts—which are weak and inaccessible. Justice comes from the barrel of a gun. Rido, serving justice by taking the law into their own hands, has steadily become the norm for most families. The MNLF maintains the law in their areas.

I hate to say it but Sulu reminds me of Palestine (Veronica, you are right in your observation!). The MNLF is the Hamas of Sulu while the MILF is the Hamas of Maguindanao.

Speaking of Hamas, they have managed to transform themselves into a political force in Palestine, winning the elections. Will the MNLF and MILF transform as well? For answers, I visited MNLF Chairman Nur Misuari last Thursday with my cousin, Ruayda (Nur's wife).

Under house arrest, Chairman Nur is on top of the world! The Palace-backed maneuver to ease him out of the MNLF leadership has backfired and Misuari is firmly in control. The charges of rebellion filed against him, for which he has been incarcerated since 2001, is going nowhere. The longer Misuari is in jail, the more popular he becomes. So popular that he is considering running for Governor of Sulu. "Maas" (Tausug term for "old man," a nickname for Misuari) told me that his followers are pushing him to run for governor.

Given the way this government abuses elected government officials who do not toe the official line, I advised Maas against running for governor. Become the voice of your people and run for the Senate instead, I said! He laughed and said, "I would rather run for barangay captain!" Hmmm. I wonder why...

The Philippine Council for Islam and Democracy and the Moro Times are pleased to announce the start of a monthly essay writing contest for young Moros. It is our hope that this will stimulate scholarship, raise social consciousness, and cultivate critical thinking among the Moro youth.



## PCID/MORO TIMES ESSAY WRITING CONTEST

### Guidelines

1. Eligible participants are Muslim or Moro youth, 25 years or under, Filipino citizen here or abroad
2. Topic: **Is Islam Compatible with Democracy?**
3. Essay must be written in English in 8.5"x11" white bond paper, double spaced, Times New Roman 12, and must not exceed 1,000 words but not less than 750 words. Place your name and address, and contact number (landline and mobile) at the end of your essay.
4. Winning entry will be published in the Moro Times and will receive a cash prize of P1,500.

You may send your essay on or before February 20, 2007 to: Unit 20-Tower 1, Governor's Place Condominium, 562 Shaw Blvd., Mandaluyong City, Philippines

Or email entry to: [mkfi\\_pcid@pltdtdsl.net](mailto:mkfi_pcid@pltdtdsl.net)

For more details you may phone us at +632 5326058 or +632 5313522.





# Sulu Home Builder Honored by PGMA

BY ARIEL BACOL

ENGINEER MICHAEL ERASUL ABUBAKAR of Sulu was recently awarded by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo one of the five outstanding Overseas Filipino Entrepreneurs (OFEs). Engr. Abubakar is among the pioneer professional Overseas Contract Workers in Saudi Arabia. After 23 years of working abroad, he came back to the Philippines and put up the M. Abubakar Consolidated Engineering (MACE) which builds decent and affordable homes for the people in Patikul, Sulu called the First Sulu Estate Subdivision.

Mickey, as he is called, envisions his project to become "a model community, a repository of the future leaders of Sulu where people can grow up and be reared in the most ideal environment". The Sulu First Estate, which features modern communities having complete amenities, cemented roads with sidewalks, effective drainage system, and a 24-hour supply of water and electricity has already carried out this vision and has been generating employment for more than 80 families in the area. "The award would accentuate my passion to awaken the long-abandoned aspiration of the people and communicate a strong message which is powerful enough to mobilize Sulu's entry to a sustainable peace process," the 66-year-old son of Sulu said. "My goal to revitalize Sulu is grounded on my belief to do something greater than I am."



■ Michael Abubakar receives his trophy as one of the five Most Inspiring OFW Entrepreneurs from President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo during the awarding ceremonies of the Go Negosyo Para sa mga Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW's) and Balikbayans Fair in Taguig City. BENJAMIN BASUG/OPS-NIB PHOTO



■ Engineer Kagim Jajurie receives his award from Vice-President Noli 'Kabayan' de Castro. Jajurie, who worked a record 33 years in the Middle East, is one of three grand champions selected for Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao.

## Tausug Professional merits Model OFW

BY ARIEL BACOL

FORMER DPWH-ARMM Sec. and Engineer Kagim Jajurie of Zamboanga Sibugay Province won the grand prize in the National Search for Model Overseas Filipino Workers' Family Award (MOFYA) 2006. The MOFYA annual search conducted by the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) honors the success of the OFW's families in terms of enterprise development and generation of employment opportunities as they optimize the gains of migration. No less than Vice-President Noli de Castro personally handed over

the awards to the three grand champions representing Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao.

Engr. Jajurie worked for 33 years in Saudi Arabia and came home when MNLF Chair Nur Misuari requested Muslim professionals abroad to help rebuild Muslim Mindanao. Jajurie has been a recipient of an award for Exemplary Service given by the Saudi Government in recognition for his dedication and commitment to his job. Upon his return to the Philippines, he became the Secretary of DPWH-ARMM and also went on to become part of the Tulay ng Pangulo Project.

## Mustapha Gandarosa: Raking in revenues

BY NASSER SHARIEF

HOW did a Moro from a sleepy town in Malaig, Lanao del Sur, end up traveling the world's 129 cities and 57 countries and then be awarded Outstanding Certified Public Accountant (CPA) in Government Service in 1979 and 1989, and double the collection of Misamis Oriental to become number one district revenue officer in the country in 1983?

"Steady ascent is I think what makes a man," Mustapha Gandarosa said, currently the Director of Revenue Region 16 of the Bureau of Internal Revenue. "I don't really believe in short-lived pyrotechnics. I plan for 5 years."

Wherever he was assigned, Muss—as Mustapha is called by friends—raised the revenue collection of the office setting precedents for other BIR officers to follow. When Muss was appointed Revenue District Officer of Bukidnon in 1985 the revenue collection of the place was 39 million pesos; when he left in 1987, it was 87 million pesos.

Muss early in childhood exhibited an aptitude for pooling resources. At age nine he organized his friends to collect durian at night. "Our barrio is full of ripe durians falling off trees in the dead of the night. If you wait for daytime, others would have carted away the durians." The night vigils earned the kids some pocket money for school.

Muss started his formal education with the Marawi Central Elementary Pilot School where he was valedictorian. After high school, Muss was hoping to study medicine but switched to Business Administration and never looked back. "In college, I lived in La Peral along Recto because I want to be near the University of the East campus. La Peral is a crumbling building that ought to be condemned and I had my share of earthquake shakes but I couldn't complain. I was living off on allowances I received as a scholar from the then Commission on National Integration, as Veteran grantee, and as a member of the honors class of the university." College was a defining moment for the young Muss.

See REVENUES D3

## Bahjin: First Muslim Woman Ambassador

BY NASSER SHARIEF

AT the turn of the 70s, in Jolo, Sulu, the Bahjins were renting the upper floor of a building for their home. The ground floor was occupied by two restaurants and one shop selling lumber. Because she had a small family and lived frugally, Cora Bahjin sublet half the floor to a group of young men who seemed very enthusiastic with whatever they were doing.

"They were homely and polite, this young bunch. Whenever I brought home some live chickens, I would ask one of them to slaughter them the Islamic way. But I had a few misgivings because we halved the charges for electric and water and they seemed to have many visitors, day and night." Cora reminisced. "They seemed to be ablaze with energy, they hardly sleep at all". Years later, one of the young men officially declared rebellion against the government. That young man was Nur Misuari.

Cora's links to the Tausug come from her grandmothers and her late husband, Datu Samsuddin Rasul Bahjin.

Cora's mother converted to Catholicism in the 40s, in gratitude to their devout Catholic neighbors who helped the family in their hour of need. "My

father was a universal man. He believed that there is goodness in all religions, and he was liberal." After Cora bore two children, her father asked her to decide which faith to follow. She didn't hesitate. "I want to be a Muslim," she answered.

Bahjin graduated Bachelor of Science in Education cum laude at the University of Santo Tomas in 1967, co-major in English and Theology. This later major never fails to raise eyebrows whenever people learn that Bahjin is a Muslim. "Senator Ponce Enrile was surprised when I told him so," Bahjin said. In 1974 Bahjin had her Master of Arts, major in Social Studies, at the University of the Philippines.

Before embarking on a diplomat career, Bahjin was an educator. She taught at the Holy Trinity College in Palawan (1967), at the Centro Escolar University (1972), then the Palawan State University where she eventually became an Assistant Professor.

### Diplomatic career

Ambassador Bahjin rose from the ranks. She started out as acting director of the Cultural Division of the Office of Islamic Affairs (now the Office on Muslim Affairs) in 1982. She had her first assignment abroad as Vice Consul in Jeddah in 1986. She

went back to Manila in 1998 to become a director of the Office of Middle East and African Affairs. In 1990 she served as Second Secretary and Consul in Amman, Jordan. In 1991 she was moved to Cairo, Egypt where a year later she became the Charge d' Affaires. Cora has also served in Bangkok and Beijing.

Cora believes in work ethic. "In my case I have to prove myself every step of the way." She finds it unsettling that Muslim applicants expect special treatment because of their faith. "I believe that young Muslim graduates can stand toe-to-toe with anybody in the job market." While she acknowledges the presence of prejudice in the workplace, she believes Muslims must prove that the prejudice is unwarranted. "We must disabuse non-Muslims of their pre-judgments about us." She stresses that Muslims have to fight negative stereotypes. "A few misguided ones among us—in their scheme to cash-in on crisis—try to live up to the caricature that the media is trying to portray us."

Ambassador Bahjin believes religion should not be the key factor in postings of Muslim diplomats. "Why can't we field Muslims to Europe or the U.S. and other countries just as anybody else? If integration is re-

ally the thrust then I think we have to tear out all the barriers—both imagined and real. In my case, I think I broke the taboo that I was assigned in Bangkok and later in Xiamen."

### On Terrorism and Media

Bahjin is not impressed with the programs to fight terrorism, especially racial profiling and the media focus on the war on terror.

Bahjin laments that the media in the Philippines dwell on bad news and crimes. She compares Thailand and Philippines: "The Thais put upfront their projects, what they build, and the beneficial laws they pass. Here what we paint is very damaging for tourism and to our economy. Sure, there is bad news then but what about the positive things being done? The emphasis on terrorism only works against us."

She also believes that the decline of the Philippines into poverty should be arrested. "We're not doing as much, I believe. We have to pedal more. We used to be a forerunner in Asia. Countries like Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia had to learn from our knees."

"What I learned from my travels is that the face of the beggar is the same everywhere. People are migrating because they cannot improve their lives.



■ Ambassador Ma. Corazon Yap-Bahjin

I don't mind people going to work abroad as long as they are dignified. Only I'm against deploying domestic workers."

### Spirituality and Interfaith

Bahjin always keeps a Qur'an in her office. Every morning before she begins her routine she would open to *Sura Yasin* and read to calm her mind and for guidance.

"My preoccupation now is interfaith dialogue. This is the trend now. My exposure to many faith, and, yes, my theology background gave me a lead

start. In the Department of Foreign Affairs we organize workshops, conferences and programs to promote interfaith dialogue. The DFA and OPAPP have both been active locally. Outside the Philippines, we have been at the forefront of this important undertaking. The Philippines has co-sponsored many regional and international dialogues for the promotion of peace and respect for human dignity."

With her background and experience, the DFA is indeed lucky to have Ambassador Bahjin.