

ONE MESSAGE, ONE UMMAH

Historic ulama summit talks about peace

A MORE empowered Muslim religious sector is a key to attaining peace in the country.

This was the consensus of nearly 200 ulama—or Muslim religious scholars and leaders—who gathered from all over the country to discuss the feasibility of establishing a national organization during the First National Summit of Ulama in the Philippines, held January 28 to 30 at the Bayview Park Hotel in Manila.

While a number of ulama groups already exist, there has been no national organization that includes all the major groups, similar to networks that exist in Muslim countries. The lack of unity among the ulama is generally attributed to tribalism, political differences and lack of institutional support.

A 2006 Social Weather Station survey indicated that Muslims follow their ulama more than Catholics follow their priest.

"It is important that we harness this potential so that Muslim religious leaders can have more impact in improving both the spiritual and existential lives of our people," former Senator Santanina Rasul said.

National ulama organization

"This summit is the culmination of five regional consultative workshops held in Zamboanga City, Cotabato City, Cagayan de Oro City and Metro Manila," said Dr. Hamid Barra, the project director.

The summit in Manila was part of a three-year "Empowering the Ulama" project of the Philippine Council for Islam and Democracy, supported by the British Embassy and the Royal Embassy of The Netherlands.

During the workshops, ulama

participants agreed that there is a need to unite the Muslim religious scholars of the country, that such unity is crucial for the promotion of peace and development in the Muslim areas. The ulama agreed to establish a national federation that will involve the various ulama groups already in existence. An ad-hoc committee was proposed to prepare a draft structure and bylaws that will embody the ideas of the participants.

United ulama

The two-day summit featured lectures from highly respected Muslim scholars from here and abroad: including Muhammadiyah Chair Dr. HM Din Syamsuddin, *Nadhlatul Ulama's* Dr. Masykuri Abdillah, Prof. Haji Maarouf Bin Haji Salleh of Singapore's Center for Contemporary Islamic Studies and Dr. Muneer Fareed of the Islamic Society of North America.

Syamsuddin, head of the influential Muhammadiyah with a membership of 35 million, argued that Islam, contrary to misconception, is a religion of progress and dynamism. He stressed that Islam can be employed to become competitive in today's world as Islam must be increasingly seen as a problem-solver of the issues confronting the Muslims in the modern world.

Fareed, secretary-general of the Islamic Society of North America, largest Muslim organization in the United States and Canada, appealed to the participants to bring back the legacy of the ulama by providing leadership to their impoverished communities. It is only through enlightened leader-



■ Some 200 ulama convened at a historic summit in Manila that tackled issues about bringing lasting peace to Mindanao. At the gathering, former Senator Santanina Rasul (left photo) emphasized harnessing the influence of religious leaders in helping improve the lives of Filipinos.

ship, he said, that extremism can be countered.

Abdillah, vice-chairman of Nadhlatul Ulama, the largest Muslim organization in the world, explained that in Indonesia, most ulama support democracy as a political system implemented in the Muslim state, because it is compatible with Islamic doctrines and principles such as justice, peace, equality, brotherhood, pluralism, trust and accountability and tolerance.

Salleh, meanwhile, shared the experiences of the Muslims in Singapore who are considered a minority community (15 percent of the population) in a Chinese-dominant and Buddhist-majority setting. He added that the Muslims in Singapore have adopted a "non-confrontational approach" to government and the majority. This, Salleh said, has successfully led to a delicate

balance of social cohesiveness and national integration, which are paramount in nation building.

Mutilan testimonial

The summit also featured a posthumous award to the late Dr. Mahid Mutilan, who died in a vehicular accident in December. Mutilan, co-founder of the influential Bishops-Ulama Conference, is widely recognized as a pioneer in pushing for the empowerment of the ulama.

The award given by the Magbassa Kita Foundation Inc. and the Philippine Council for Islam and Democracy paid tribute to "his life-long dedication to peace through interfaith dialog, empowerment of the ulama and madrasah education."

The award, accepted by his widow, Aleema Khadija Mutilan, cited Mutilan as a "reasoned voice of tolerance, moderation and democracy."

Archbishop Fernando Capalla and Bishop Hilario Gomez Jr., Mutilan's co-convenor of the Bishops-Ulama Conference, together with Fr. Eliseo Mercado Jr. and former Senator Rasul paid tribute to the late Muslim leader.

Capalla, in a statement read during the dinner, paid tribute to Mutilan's "open and broadminded approach to us Catholic and Protestant bishops in Mindanao, [which resulted in] a significant improvement in the relationships between Christians and Muslims."

Gomez called Mutilan "a man of peace." He added that "it is surprising to have such a great Muslim leader who, like that proverbial voice in the wilderness, preached the message of salaam and shalom or peace in the midst of decades-old conflict in Mindanao."

Rasul emphasized the contribu-

►PeaceD2

Major survey challenges Western perceptions about Islam

WASHINGTON: A huge survey of the world's Muslims released earlier this week challenges Western notions that equate Islam with radicalism and violence.

The survey, conducted by the Gallup polling agency over six years and three continents, seeks to dispel the belief held by some in the West that Islam itself is the driving force of radicalism.

It shows that the overwhelming majority of Muslims condemned the attacks against the United States on September 11, 2001 and other subsequent terrorist attacks, the authors of the study said in Washington on Tuesday.

"Samuel Harris said in the *Washington Times* [in 2004]: 'It is time we admitted that we are not at war with terrorism. We are at war with Islam,'" Dalia Mogahed, co-author of the book *Who Speaks for Islam*, which grew out of the study, told a news conference here.

"The argument Mr. Harris makes is that religion in the primary driver" of radicalism and violence, she said.

"Religion is an important part of life for the overwhelming majority of Muslims, and if it were indeed the driver for radicalization, this would be a serious issue."

But the study, which Gallup says surveyed a sample equivalent to 90 percent of the world's Muslims, showed that widespread religiosity "does not translate into widespread support for terrorism," said Mogahed, director of the Gallup Center for Muslim Studies.

About 93 percent of the world's 1.3 billion Muslims are moderates and only 7 percent are politically radical, according to the poll, based on more than 50,000 interviews.

In majority Muslim countries, overwhelming majorities said religion was a very important part of their lives—99 percent in Indonesia, 98 percent in Egypt, ►IslamD2

Muslim vows to care of Christian, Muslim students as MSU head

THE road toward the presidency of the country's largest university in Mindanao for Dr. Macapado Muslim was riddled with politics and intrigue.

The post eluded Muslim although he was the top choice of the Search Committee tasked to select the president of Mindanao State University System (MSUS).

In 2005, a Malacañang-authorized search committee, chaired by former Commissioner Christina Padolina of the Commission on Higher Education, recommended Muslim to succeed Dr. Camar Umpa. But national police general Ricardo de Leon was unexpectedly appointed by President Gloria Arroyo as transition president.

The reason given for his appointment was to restore peace and order in the university. Malacañang's appointment of de Leon as acting president was widely criticized. De Leon, who did not have the qualifications required, was not one of the 21 nominees screened by the search committee.

After two and a half years, Muslim was finally appointed and installed on January 31. During the turnover ceremony at the Main Campus in Marawi City, he graciously acknowledged the positive contributions of de Leon in improving the Marawi Campus and his resource generation initiatives.

Muslim appealed for support among the administrators and the faculty, 3,100 of whom are serving in 10 campuses in Mindanao. Mindanao State has about 53,000 students, making it the third-largest



■ Dr. Macapado Muslim

state university in the country.

Muslim said he envisions a university "that is more vibrant not only in instruction but also in research and extension [or] community service; MSU that is stronger not only in terms of the value of academic excellence but also in terms of societal relevance and affirmative action for the Muslims and other ethnic minorities in 'Minsupala' [Mindanao,

Sulu and Palawan]; MSU that operates and grows synergistically, with its component campuses growing in their respective region-specific concerns and areas of comparative strength and advantage, and sharing with each other their capabilities competitive in the 21st century; and MSU under a leadership enjoying high levels of respectability and credibility."

Muslim, a native of Marawi City, is an

alumnus of the Mindanao State. He received his master's in public administration from the University of the Philippines. He obtained his master's and doctorate in political science from the University of Hawaii as an East-West Center scholar. Muslim was a chancellor of Mindanao State in General Santos City for 11 years and was a concurrent member of the MSU Board of Regents.

He told an audience at Mindanao State, "As your new president, I will be your caring, highly accessible, responsible and effective big brother, not only to the Muslim students of MSU but also to the Christian and Lumad students."

The soft-spoken Muslim specialized on multiculturalism. His landmark publication is *The Moro Armed Struggle in the Philippines: The Nonviolent Autonomy Alternative*. He also wrote *Towards a Nonkilling Society in the Philippines: The Need for Multiculturalist Governance, Sustaining the Constituency for Moro Autonomy, ACCORD: An International Journal of Peace Initiatives*, and *The GRP-MNLF Peace Agreement: A Preliminary Assessment of its Implementation, for the Philippine Journal of Public Administration*.

Mindanao State University was established in Marawi City on September 1, 1961. It is the only university in the Philippines with a special mandate to integrate the cultural communities, specially the Muslims into the mainstream Philippine society.

►►feature

Tamano's appointment to PLM marks first for Filipino Muslims

"THE ink of a scholar is holier than the blood of a martyr. I cannot think of anything more emphatic than this to show what a high virtue education is in the Islamic faith."

Thus, Adel Tamano began his inaugural speech as the 17th President of the Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Maynila (PLM).

Manila City Mayor Fred Lim made history—the appointment of the Harvard-educated Tamano makes him the first Muslim president of a university outside Muslim Mindanao. Wearing a black toga before thousands of students at the PLM auditorium on January 31, Tamano acknowledged the irony of his appointment

to head a university within Intramuros.

"The walls of Intramuros were precisely made to keep someone like me, a Moro, as well the other marginalized and oppressed people of that time outside, while those in power—the Spaniards and their minions—enjoyed the safety, the power, and the luxury of the walled city. Intramuros was, at that time, a symbol of oppression, discrimination, and persecution," he said.

The youngest university president in the country today, the 37-year-old is the son of the late Senator Mamintal Tamano and Bai Zorayda Abbas Tamano. A brilliant and eloquent lawyer like his father, the PLM president was the first Filipino ►►PLMD2



►►FILM FUROR

Geert Wilders (right), leader of the far-right Dutch parliamentary party Party for Freedom (PVV), smiles next to Defense Minister Henk Kamp prior to a parliamentary debate about the invasion of Iraq in The Hague. Wilders directed the controversial anti-Islam film called *Fitna* (Ordeal), which will be aired on television in The Netherlands in March. The film accuses the Koran of inciting people to murder provoked reactions with some of the Muslim communities. (See related story page D3). AFP PHOTO

Religious leaders work to demystify 'halal'

BY FORT O. NICOLAS CORRESPONDENT

DAVAO CITY:
What's the fuss about "halal" food?

In Islam, a faithful is required to make sure that no unclean substance gets inside the body. Hence, Muslims follow a certain process to ascertain that their foods are clean or "halal," an Arabic term that means "permissible according to the Koran," the Islamic version of the Christian Bible.

Animals, like cows and goats, must be slaughtered, and its blood spilled for them to be considered halal, according to Aleem Jamaal Munib, executive director of Madrasah and chairman of the Philippine Halal Accreditation Board (PHAB) in Region 11.

The only food that cannot be cleaned no matter what process it is put through is pork, which is declared irreversibly "haram" or forbidden since Islamic beliefs pinpointed the pig as the dirtiest animal that God ever created.

But even chickens that scavenged food need to be quarantined for three days and given clean feeds before Muslims can eat them.

"Certainly, a Muslim who happens to eat something that is "haram" does not commit a crime in this country and



■ Aleem Jamaal Munib speaks during the Club 888 media forum at the Marco Polo Hotel in Davao City last month. He said a Muslim who eats something that is not halal commits a sin in the eyes of God.

will not be jailed or penalized," Munib said during a media forum in January in Marco Polo in Davao City. "But he commits a sin in the eyes of God."

Munib complained of restaurants and food chains that pass themselves off as "halal-certified" but actually are not just to attract Muslim customers, who, in the process, commit a sin without knowing it by

eating "haram" foods.

Some manufacturers of canned goods brazenly declare their products "halal" when these had not been certified nor monitored by authorities.

But the Islamic leader expressed hopes this will all change after March 13, 2008. On this date, some 100 "Ulama" or Muslim leaders are set to meet President Gloria Arroyo in

Malacañang to ask her to recognize the Philippine Halal Accreditation Board as an official partner of the Department of Trade and Industry that will monitor and curb the abuses some establishments commit against this holy Islamic practice.

The accreditation board is a private group, but Munib said the Trade department has given its assurance that it will endorse the organization to the President.

Once given the official clout, the Philippine Halal Accreditation Board can immediately set up standards and guidelines not only to police the abuses but also pave the way for the Philippines to get a piece of the action in the global halal industry worth \$600 billion.

"Remember that we are the only bird flu-free country in Southeast Asia," Munib said. "Imagine if we can get even just one percent of the global market."

The market for halal food even in the region alone is vast, he discloses, as Brunei, Malaysia and Indonesia are the biggest halal consumers in Southeast Asia.

"But the problem is that these countries would only import through a government-to-government arrangement," Munib explained. "Unless there is an official "halal" accreditation body, they would not get these goods from the Philippines."

"Hopefully, all these problems will be solved after March 13," he said.

Philippines to launch first guideline book for making halal food

THE Philippines will launch its first guideline book on making halal food in accordance with international standard, in order to promote the country's food industry, the official Philippine News Agency quoted Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap as saying recently.

Yap said there is a huge international market for halal food, so the country must promote the production of the food for both home and foreign consumers, said the report.

The fundamental concept and practices of halal, which means "lawful" or "permissible" as a broad term used to describe how a Muslim must conduct his life, are embodied in the Muslim holy book Koran, Hadith, the Shariah law, as well as other Islamic jurisprudence, according to the report.

The requirements for halal products across the globe are estimated to be more than \$200 billion annually.

Yap said the guidelines will provide food processors, traders, exporters and marketing logistic operators with the necessary information in preparing, packing, labeling and handling of halal foods.

Hence, people can rely on halal certification as a seal of food safety and quality assurance, he said.

Muslim religious scholars and leaders in the Philippines have also formed a board that will accredit halal certifiers to ensure the strict implementation of the Philippine General Guidelines on halal Food, according to the report.

The Philippines has 10 million Muslims, most of them living in Manila and Mindanao.

XINHUA

■ ISLAM FROM D1

Western views wrong on Islam

95 percent in Pakistan.

But only 7 percent of the billion Muslims surveyed—the radicals—condoned the attacks on the United States in 2001, the poll showed.

Moderate Muslims interviewed for the poll condemned the 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington because innocent lives were lost and civilians killed.

"Some actually cited religious justifications for why they were against 9/11, going as far as to quote from the Koran—for example, the verse that says taking one innocent life is like killing all humanity," she said.

Meanwhile, radical Muslims gave political, not religious, reasons for condoning the attacks, the poll showed. The survey shows radicals to be neither more religious than their moderate counterparts, nor products of abject poverty or refugee camps.

"The radicals are better educated, have better jobs, and are more hopeful with regard to the future than mainstream Muslims," John Esposito, who co-authored *Who Speaks for Islam*, said.

"Ironically, they believe in democracy even more than many of the mainstream moderates do, but they're more cynical about whether they'll ever get it," said Esposito, a professor of Islamic studies at Georgetown University in Washington.

Gallup launched the study following 9/11, after which US President George W.

Bush asked in a speech, which is quoted in the book: "Why do they hate us?"

"They hate... a democratically elected government," Bush offered as a reason.

"They hate our freedoms—our freedom of religion, our freedom of speech, our freedom to vote and assemble and disagree with each other."

But the poll, which gives ordinary Muslims a voice in the global debate that they have been drawn into by 9/11, showed that most Muslims—including radicals—admire the West for its democracy, freedoms and technological prowess.

What they do not want is to have Western ways forced on them, it said.

"Muslims want self-determination, but not an American-imposed and defined democracy. They don't want secularism or theocracy. What the majority wants is democracy with religious values," said Esposito.

The poll has given voice to Islam's silent majority, said Mogahed.

"A billion Muslims should be the ones that we look to, to understand what they believe, rather than a vocal minority," she told Agence France-Presse.

Muslims in 40 countries in Africa, Asia, Europe and the Middle East were interviewed for the survey, which is part of Gallup's World Poll that aims to interview 95 percent of the world's population.

AFP



■ PEACE FROM D1

Historic ulama summit talks about peace

tions of Mutilan to Islamic education as an instrument for peace. "He was a champion of peace... his accomplishment with the Islamic education system is a great achievement, and my hope is that his work will serve to inspire others who come after him," she said.

During the opening ceremonies, Dutch Ambassador Robert Gerard Brinks stressed the importance of tolerance. "Freedom of expression, tolerance and a willingness to make concessions formed and still

in freedom," the envoy said.

The outputs of the summit were presented during closing ceremonies attended by the participants and guests including British Ambassador Peter Bevington. He congratulated the participants for their historic summit.

Bevington said the ties between the United Kingdom and the Muslims in the Philippines, dating back to the agreement between the Sultanate of Sulu and the British East India Company, predates Philippine

relations with any other Western government.

Rasul supported the calls made by some participants to have continued dialogues, and small working groups "to constantly bring out into the open the many problems and challenges that the ulama face."

She told participants during the closing banquet ceremonies that the ulama's mission "is not just preaching the true message of Islam, but also the development of your communities."

Not welcome

Members of the umbrella organization, Ranao Crescent Against Balikatan Exercises (RACABE), march in Marawi recently. They headed toward the public plaza, Banggolo in the town proper, to protest the presence of American troops in the city.

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■ PLM FROM D1

Tamano's appointment to PLM marks first for Filipino Muslims

Muslim student given a scholarship to attend the Harvard College of Law. He made history for Filipinos when he was elected as the graduation speaker.

Even then, he focused on education and its effect on multi-culturalism.

"For someone like myself, a Filipino Muslim, studying at Harvard was an unbelievable opportunity," he said. "In the predominantly Muslim areas of the Philippines, out of 10 grade-school students, only two will be able to complete high school. Those in the developing world know, firsthand, that education is a truly precious commodity."

Today, Tamano worries about underinvestment in education, with a national shortage of 43,000 classrooms.

"We spend in the Philippines only about \$650 per student, while in Thailand they spend about three times that much. In Malaysia they spend a hundred times more per child than we do in the Philippines," Tamano said.

The young Tamano obtained a Master's Degree in Public Administration from

■ When lawyer Adel Tamano was named president of PLM, he became the first Filipino Muslim to head a university outside of ARMM. PHOTO BY SARAH ENCABO

the University of the Philippines. He was a professor of law at the Ateneo de Manila University, Far Eastern University, City University of Manila and Mindanao State University.

Tamano's investiture was attended by opposition leaders led by Senate President Manuel Villar Jr. Senators Mar Roxas 2nd, Alan Peter Cayetano, Benigno "Nonoy" Aquino 3rd, Jinggoy Estrada and Nene Pimentel joined Mayor Lim and San Juan City Mayor JV Ejercito at the PLM investiture.

Tamano was prominently featured in media last year as the spokesman of the United Opposition. The *Philippine Star* in May 2007 reported, "Opposition spokesman Adel Tamano has endeared himself to media and is now the subject of talk that he could be the top-notcher of the next senatorial elections. Tamano's cool demeanor and his facility at expounding the Opposition's position in a simple, concise and credible way make him a natural winner before the public eye."

Columnist Ellen Tordesillas of *Malaya* wrote in August 2007 that Tamano's "good looks and intelligent statements lent credibility to the opposition's campaign much to the dismay of Gloria Arroyo's Team Unity propagandists."

AMINA RASUL AND SAMIRA GUTOC

»feature

Welcome to Peace Village, Canada's Muslim community



■ Naseer Ahmad, initiator of the "Peace Village," poses in front of the local mosque in Vaughan in December last year. The homes come with separate living rooms for men and women. Streets are named Bashir, Zafrulla Khan and Abdus Salam. And every house has a view of the mosque, visible from miles around. This is Peace Village, a residential housing development in a Toronto suburb that caters to Muslims—but is open to anyone. AFP PHOTO

VAUGHAN, Canada: The homes come with separate living rooms for men and women. Streets are named Bashir, Zafrulla Khan, and Abdus Salam. And every house has a view of the mosque, visible from miles around.

This is Peace Village, a residential housing development in a Toronto suburb that caters to Muslims—but is open to anyone.

It grew around a small mosque that sprouted in the early 1990s in a cornfield along a desolate highway in this nondescript suburb of Toronto, Canada's larg-

est metropolis with five million residents, where one in two people are immigrants.

Built by a handful of devout Ahmadiyya Muslims—a sect founded at the end of the 19th century in what is now Pakistan, but considered heretics by some—the mosque is today the centerpiece of this emerging neighborhood.

Initially, "the main motivation was to bring worshippers close to the mosque," developer Naseer Ahmad told Agence France-Presse. Born in Pakistan, the 54-year-old immigrated to Canada in 1976.

From each residence, homeowners have a clear view of the central mosque. Each home has a double garage and a green lawn to trim in summer.

Officially started in 1998, the village is now home to more than 260 upper-middle class families.

The area streets borrow names from Pakistan's official language, Urdu, or honor famous Pakistan nationals such as 1979 Nobel laureate Abdus Salam.

Every kitchen is equipped with an extra powerful ventilation system to help clear the air when preparing extra spicy or smoky ethnic dishes.

And homes are designed with two living rooms—one for men, and another for women.

Adil Malik, a businessman, has lived with his wife in Peace Village since 2001.

"My children are growing up here. It is really positive for them," Malik said of his three sons.

"I have seen other kids [grow up here]. They are teenagers and they are very productive members of society... going to university," he said.

"We look at it in the point of view that it is a community that supports each other."

A house here costs about \$500,000 (Canadian, US or 345,000 euros) and strong demand has forced developers to add a second phase, now under construction.

"It has given true meaning to [Canada's] multiculturalism concept," said the developer Ahmad, photographs of himself with leading Canadian politicians littering his office.

But even if it was conceived for Muslims, Peace Village is open to anyone, he said.

To date, only Muslims have bought homes here, leading some to accuse Ahmad of having created a Muslim ghetto or a segregated community within a vastly multicultural society.

"It is a very good neighborhood," he insisted, not a place where poor immigrants are forced to live in squalor.

"There were some fears at the beginning" of it becoming a Muslim ghetto, he said. "But the time has proven that it has not become a ghetto. The property values are very high. There is no violence and the streets are clean."

Patricia Wood, an associate professor at York University who has researched multiculturalism and immigration, also defended the housing development, noting that while some aspects of the project may seem new, the creation of ethnic or religious-based neighborhoods "is actually a very old practice" on this continent.

"If you look at the history of North America, some of the earliest settlements have specific groups coming and establishing their own communities with their own buildings and their own institutions in very close proximity to one another."

There are very few immigrant groups that did not create their own neighborhoods within larger cities, and historically it has been good for them and society at large, she said.

Wood concedes that some people may have some difficulty with the concept, which can also be seen in an all-Catholic village in Florida called Ave Maria.

Some people have "a more generalized fear of the Muslim community" since the attacks of September 11, 2001, that killed almost 3,000 people in New York, Pennsylvania and Washington, she said.

Whether it be the Muslim Peace Village, or Vancouver's century-old Chinatown, "there is so much mutual support in these communities that would not necessarily be available in Canadian society."

"It's been a very important part of successful migration in Canada and the United States," she said. **AFP**

Malaysian govt worried about Kelantan state

KUALA LUMPUR: A Malaysian minister warned that investors might be deterred if a fundamentalist Islamic party retains control of its stronghold in northern Kelantan state.

"Foreign investors study the capability of the state government first before making their investments," Deputy Finance Minister Awang Adek Hussin told the Bernama news agency Wednesday, as campaigning heats up ahead of March 8 elections.

Awang Adek said controversial comments from party leaders—including that ugly women should be given priority in government jobs because pretty women can find rich husbands—were not business-friendly.

Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi last year launched a \$33.5-billion development plan for Malaysia's poor eastern states, including Kelantan, the only state run by the hard-line Pan-Malaysia Islamic Party (PAS).

The East Coast Economic Corridor project, drawn up by the national oil company Petronas, is aimed at developing the rural Malay heartland states of Kelantan, Terengganu, Pahang and the district of Mersing in Johor state.

Awang Adek said the PAS state government might not be able to attract all the promised investment under the plan, and that it was not able to afford its election pledges.

"They can make so many promises that they are not capable of delivering. The people will be the real losers," he said.

PAS holds only a wafer-thin majority in Kelantan, a state considered a key battleground in the polls. **AFP**

Dutch Cabinet against airing anti-Koran film

BRUSSELS: Two Dutch cabinet ministers have held a meeting with Dutch right-wing lawmaker Geert Wilders to dissuade him from releasing his film critical of Islam, Radio Netherlands reported Wednesday.

Dutch Justice Minister Ernst Hirsch Ballin and Foreign Minister Maxime Verhagen met Wilders on behalf of the Dutch Cabinet. They warned him that he could face prosecution for bringing out the film, the report said.

The Dutch government is concerned that the film, due to be released in March, will damage the reputation of The Netherlands and will have consequences for Dutch businesses abroad.

Wilders, leader of the anti-Islam, anti-immigration Freedom Party (PVV) which has nine seats in the lower house of Dutch parliament, described the meeting as an attempt at intimidation, Radio Netherlands said.

Wilders, who calls for the banning of the Koran in The Netherlands, said his 15-minute movie will show images of atrocities allegedly inspired by the Koran verses.

He said he will try to show the film via an official broadcaster. Meanwhile, he has set up a separate website where the film will be shown in any event. Wilders also plans to put the film on the YouTube website.

Amsterdam's Public Prosecutor has for some time been investigating the possibility of taking the lawmaker to court because of his inflammatory public statements. **XINHUA**

Turkey's president OK's amendment lifting ban on head scarves in universities

ANKARA: Turkish President Abdullah Gul recently approved constitutional amendments that allow Islamic head scarves at universities.

The Law No. 5735 envisages amendments in Articles 10 on equality and Articles 42 on right to education of the Constitution.

Under the first amendment, last sentence of Article 10 says, "State organs and administrative authorities shall act in compliance with the principle of equality before the law in all their proceedings and in benefiting

from all public services."

The second amendment in article 42 on "Right and Duty of Training and Education" adds a paragraph that "no one can be deprived of his/her right to higher education for reasons not openly mentioned by laws. The limits of the use of this right will be determined by law."

On February 9, the Turkish parliament voted 411-103 in a final vote and approved the constitutional amendments aiming to

lift a ban on female students wearing Islamic headscarves at universities.

The ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) and the conservative Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) that supports the changes have the required two-thirds majority in the parliament.

The headscarf reform drew fierce opposition from the secular establishment in the predominantly Muslim but secular Turkey which has long forbidden Islamic head-

scarves at universities.

The main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) did not have enough seats to hold off the measure but said it would appeal to the Constitutional Court to try to cancel it.

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the AKP and the MHP have agreed that scarves should be tied loosely with a knot beneath the chin, leaving the face exposed. **XINHUA**

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February 27, 2007

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The DPWH-Aurora District Engineering Office, through its Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), invites contractors to apply for eligibility and, if found eligible, to bid for the following contract:

Contract I.D.: 08CN0025
Contract Name: Improvement/Concreting of Dingalan National Road
Contract Location: Dingalan, Aurora
Brief Description: Conc. of nat'l. road w/ embankment, const. of lined canal w/ pipe
Culverts & installation of metal beam guardrail
Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) : P=19,100,000.00
Contract Duration: 200
Cost of Plans/Proposals: P=10,000.00

The BAC will conduct this public bidding in accordance with R.A. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A.

To be eligible to bid for this contract, a contractor must submit a Letter of Intent (LOI) and must meet the following major criteria: (a) prior registration with the DPWH, (b) Filipino citizen or 75% Filipino-owned partnership/corporation with PCAB license applicable to the type and cost of this contract, (c) completion of a similar contract costing at least 50% of ABC, and (d) Net Financial Contracting Capacity at least equal to ABC, or credit line commitment/cash deposit certificate for at least 10% of the ABC. The DPWH will use non-discretionary pass/fail criteria in the eligibility check, preliminary examination of bids, evaluation of bids, postqualification, and award.

Unregistered contractors, however, may submit their LOIs simultaneously with their applications for registration, to the DPWH-ADEO before the deadline set below for the receipt of LOIs. The DPWH Central BAC-TWG will first process the contractor's applications for registration and issue the Contractor's Certificate of Registration (CRC) before processing their LOIs. The DPWH Central BAC-TWG will process only those with complete registration requirements.

The significant times and deadlines of procurement activities are shown below:

Receipt of LOIs from Prospective Bidders	March 06, 2008 (until 4:00 p.m. only)
Issuance of Results of Eligibility Check	March 13, 2008
Issuance of Bidding Documents	March 14, 2008
Pre-Bid Conference	March 14, 2008
Receipt of Bids	Not later than 10:00 a.m. on Mar. 18, 2008
Opening of Bids	March 18, 2008, 10:01 a.m.

Prospective bidders may download the Registration and LOI Forms from the DPWH website www.dpwh.gov.ph. The BAC will issue hard copies of LOI Forms at DPWH-Baler, Aurora, upon payment of a non-refundable fee of P=300.00.

Prospective bidders that will download the LOI forms shall pay the same amount upon submission of their LOIs. Prospective bidders shall submit their accomplished LOIs and obtain the results of the eligibility check at the same address.

Prospective bidders may also download the Bidding Documents (BDs), if available, from the DPWH website. The BAC will also issue hard copies of the BDs at the same address to eligible bidders upon payment of a non-refundable fee of "Please see above". Eligible bidders that will download the BDs from the DPWH website shall pay the said fees upon the submission of their bids.

The DPWH-ADEO reserves the right to accept or reject any bid and to annul the bidding process anytime before Contract award, without incurring any liability to the affected bidders.

Approved by:
ANGEL C. BELTRAN, JR.
OIC-Asst. District Engineer
BAC Chairman

MT - Feb. 29, 2008

Republic of the Philippines
Department of Public Works and Highways
Cordillera Administrative Region
OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ENGINEER
Bangued, Abra

February 22, 2008

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Government of the Republic of the Philippines, thru the Department of Public Works & Highways (DPWH) Bangued, Abra invites potential Bidders to apply for eligibility and, if subsequently found eligible, to bid for:

Contract ID : 08PA0011
Name of Project : Concreting of La Paz-Lagayan Road
Location : La Paz, Abra
Brief Description : Concreting
Major items of Work : Item 311, 505 & Spl. I
Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC): P7,704,984.63
Duration : 200 C.D.

Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations-A (IRR-A) of Republic Act No. 9184 (R. A. 9184), otherwise known as the Government Procurement Reform Act. All particulars relative to Eligibility, Bid Bond, Performance Bond, Pre-Bid Conference, Bid Evaluation and Award of Contract shall be governed by the provisions of this Act.

Only contractors duly registered with the DPWH may be allowed to participate in the eligibility screening. Unregistered contractors must register in the Central Office, Bids and Awards Committee-Technical Working Group (BAC-TWG), 5/F Bonifacio Drive, Port Area, Manila prior to the deadline for submission of Expression of Interest. Interested contractors shall submit their duly accomplished Expression of Interest Statements upon presentation of their original Contractor Registration Certificate (CRC) in person or through their Authorized Representative as reflected in their CRC to the Chairman, Bids and Awards Committee (BAC) DPWH-Abra Engineering District, Bangued, Abra not later than 5:00P.M. of March 13, 2008.

Bid Documents will be available to eligible contractors for issuance until 5:00 PM on March 19, 2008 at the BAC/Secretariat DPWH, Abra Engineering District, Bangued, Abra upon payment of a non-refundable amount of P6,500.00.

Eligible contractors shall submit their duly accomplished Price Proposals (1st envelope-Technical Proposal and 2nd Envelope-Financial Proposal) to the Chairman, Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), DPWH, Abra Engineering Office, Bangued, Abra, not later than 10:00AM on April 1, 2008. Opening of bids is at 2:00 PM of the same date.

The DPWH-Abra Engineering District, Bangued, Abra reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, and to annul the bidding process and reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

(SGD.) SANDY B. BENEDITO
District Engineer
BAC Chairman
Rizal St., DPWH-Bangued, Abra
Tel No. 074 752-7734

MT - Feb. 29 & Mar. 10, 2008

Republic of the Philippines
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS AND HIGHWAYS
Office of the District Engineer
Quirino District Engineering Office
Cabarroguis, Quirino

February 25, 2008

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Department of Public Works and Highways – Quirino District Engineering Office, Cabarroguis, Quirino, through the Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), invites contractors to apply and, if found eligible, to bid for the following contract:

1. a. Contract I.D.	: 08BK0047
b. Name of Project	: Repair/Improvement Reblocking along Jct. Mangandingay-Saguday Road, (Km. 336+000 to Km. 346+000 with Exceptions)
c. Location	: Cabarroguis, Diffun & Saguday, Quirino
d. Brief Description	: RRP-Roads-Rehabilitation-PCCP
e. Major Items of Work	: Repair/Improvement along Jct. Mangandingay-Saguday Road, (Km. 336+000 to Km. 346+000 with Exceptions)
f. ABC	: P14,370,917.15
g. Duration	: 180 C.D.
h. Cost of Bid Documents	: P5,000.00

The Bids and Awards Committee (BAC) will conduct the public bidding in accordance with R.A. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations-A (IRR-A).

To be eligible to bid for this contract a contractor must submit a Letter of Intent (LOI) and meet the following major criteria:

- Registration with the DPWH
- Filipino Citizen or 75% Filipino owned partnership/corporation with PCAB License applicable to the type and cost of this contract
- Completion of similar contract costing at least 50% of ABC, and
- Net financial Contracting Capacity at least equal to ABC, or credit commitment/cash deposit certificate at least equal to 10% of ABC.

The BAC will use non-discretionary pass/fail criteria in the Eligibility Check Preliminary Examination of Bids Evaluation of Bids Post qualification and Award.

An unregistered contractor may submit its LOI simultaneously with its application for registration to the DPWH before the deadline set below for the receipt of LOIs. The DPWH-Central BAC-Technical Working Group/Secretariat will first process the contractor's application for registration and issue its Contractor's Registration Certificate (CRC) before processing its LOI.

The times and deadlines set for the major procurement activities shown below:

- Receipt of LOIs from Prospective Bidders - not later than 10:00A.M.
March 5, 2008
- Issuance of Bidding Documents - **March 17, 2008 up to 2:00 P.M. only**
- Pre-bid Conference - **March 19, 2008 @ 2:00 P.M.**
- Receipt of Bids - not later than 10:00A.M.
March 25, 2008
- @ 2:00 P.M.
March 25, 2008
- Opening of Bids

Prospective bidders may obtain Bidding Documents (BDs) from the DPWH – Quirino District Engineering Office BAC Secretariat, Cabarroguis, Quirino, upon receiving their Eligibility Check from DPWH – BAC-TWG, Central Office, Manila and upon payment of a non-refundable amount stated above.

The DPWH – Quirino District Engineering Office, Cabarroguis, Quirino reserves the right to accept or reject any Bids, and to annul the bidding process and reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

Approved:
(SGD.) IRENEO S. GALLATO
District Engineer
DWH – Quirino District Engineering Office
Cabarroguis, Quirino
CP # 09155489211

MT – Feb. 25, 2008