

Ready for Eid'l Fitr?

As we all know, it's the end of Ramadan on Wednesday October 1. Our celebration of *Eid'l Fitr* is a national holiday.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo issued Proclamation No. 1625 on Sept. 19. The proclamation says the aim of making the entire Filipino nation have a holiday is to allow non-Muslim Filipinos to join their Muslim brothers and sisters in the observance and celebration of *Eid'l Fitr*.

The President's Office on Muslim Affairs, following the Islamic calendar, advised the President in issuing the proclamation.

For the knowledge of non-Muslim-readers of *The Moro Times*, here are some facts *Eid'l Fitr* (also rendered in English as *Eid ul-Fitr*), which is Arabic for "Festivity of the Breaking of the Fast."

Ramadan is the holy month of fasting.

In Indonesia it is called *Idul Fitri, Hari Lebaran*. Hari means 'day' in both Bahasa Indonesia and Bahasa Malayu. In Malaysia and Brunei it is *Hari Raya Puasa, Hari Lebaran*.

Eid'l Fitr is often shortened to *Eid*. Because the day depends on the sighting of the moon or scientific calculations, the exact date varies from country to country.

Muslims greet each other in Arabic *Eid mubarak* ("Blessed Eid") or *Id sa'id* ("Happy Eid"). The greeting is also given in the local languages, according to the Islamic tradition in those places.

Muslims typically wake up early in the morning and have a small breakfast. They are encouraged to dress in their best clothes (if possible in new clothes) and do the special *Eid* prayer in community congregations at the local mosque or in any area designated by the proper religious authorities.

When Muslims finish their fast at the last day (which is the 29th or 30th of the month of Ramadan), they recite the *Takbir* prayer:

*Allahu akbar, Allahu akbar, Allahu akbar,
la ilaha illa Allah
Allahu akbar, Allahu akbar
wa li-illahi al-hamd
God is the Greatest, God is the Greatest,
There is no deity but God
God is the Greatest, God is the Greatest
and to God goes all praise*

The *Takbir* is recited after it is confirmed that the moon of Shawwal has been sighted on the eve of the last day of Ramadan. It continues until the start of the *Eid* prayer. Before the recitation of the *Eid* prayer begins, every Muslim who is able must pay *Zakat al-fitr*, the alms for the month of Ramadan.

These alms are of food which is to be distributed to the needy. The cash equivalent may be given. The alms are collected at the mosque and are distributed to the poor Muslims before the *Eid* prayer.

It may be given at any time during the month of Ramadan. It is often given in advance so that the donees may use them for *Eid* purchases.

This donation of the Muslim faithful who can afford is distinct from the *Zakat* based on wealth. The *Zakat* is paid to a worthy charity.

There is a ritual of fellowship and solidarity. Muslims also visit relatives on *Eid'l Fitr*. They also visit gravesites.

Muslim congressional 'grads' make mark on policy front

QUEZON CITY—On Tuesday, end of the month, 19 men and women are "graduating" from a USAID program that since 2003 has been providing young Muslims from Mindanao with unique exposure in the forefront of national policy formulation and lawmaking.

Datu Habib Sarifuddin Maulana, who completed the Congressional Internship Program for Young Muslim Leaders (CIPYML) in 2004, says: "It's an exceptional learning avenue for developing competent future leaders."

The CIPYML starts off with a three-week introductory governance course, followed by a 13-week internship in Congress, during which the interns work with different congressional committees and with the staff of individual representatives.

They also attend a special course in public policy development and advocacy taught by University of the Philippines faculty.

"We learned that policy can't be created overnight, it's a complicated process," says Norhana Kamid, a former science teacher who, during her CIPYML internship four years ago, helped draft a policy paper calling for more rigorous performance ratings for public school teachers.

"Drafting a bill is one thing, getting it approved is another," said Ramayana Saidamen, who did research on water resources for Rep.

Riza Hontiveros. "There are complex factors to consider, including local politics."

This month's cohort of CIPYML interns is the seventh since the program was initiated through a partnership between the Philippine House of Representatives, the U.S. government, and Mindanao State University.

The program is managed by USAID's Growth with Equity in Minanao (GEM) Program, which is implemented under the oversight of the Mindanao Economic Development Council (MEDCO).

Many of the 123 interns who have completed CIPYML ahead of the current cohort have embarked on careers in the private sector. Others work in institutions engaged in policy research and advocacy.

Kamid is a senior economic development specialist at MEDCO, while Saidamen has served as a policy development officer for the Land Administration and Management Project. Maulana works as a municipal officer in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.



The former interns candidly admitted that the close-up view afforded by CIPYML revealed to them things that can be improved in government, but this hasn't dented their own idealism and belief in the democratic system.

"Instead of complaining, people should involve themselves in the policymaking process and act as catalysts instead of detractors," said Kamid.

They also valued being able to experience their internship with other Mindanaoans. "We shared our views of the country and what we [experienced during the internship], we observed Ramadan together and shared the stress of being apart from our families," recalled Maulana.

CIPYML is also designed to provide congressmen and congressional staff with the opportunity to

interact with articulate young men and women from Mindanao's Muslim community.

"We have to overcome misinformation about Mindanao and its people," Saidamen said. "Respect for diversity should be promoted. There are many responsible Muslims contributing to the development of Mindanao and of the country as a whole."

How MILF website sees Mindanao situation

IN the midst of today's tension between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, and with the government military pursuing "rogue MILF forces" in Mindanao and the government itself demanding that the MILF central leadership surrender the "rogue commanders," how do the MILF journalists tell their readers about the situation.

Here are excerpts from an article in the MILF website, Luwaran, dated "24 Septembr 2008" and titled "Moro humanitarian tragedy unfolds: Government-AFP-PNP complicit."

"Moros know the news is bad when the administration begins to claim the AFP has the rebels on the run. Civilian casualties are not an unusual sight during army ops supported by air strikes, but such occurrence tends to undermine also public confidence in the authorities. 'There's no survival kit for man-made calamity in Mindanao. But people in our homeland marvel at the whimsy of human tragedy of war waged by the Government,' MILF peace negotiators told Luwaran blistering this week.

"Likewise there's no telling where the pendulum swings in Government ambivalence between the acoustics of war and peace in Mindanao. Where the Moro population are concentrated 'the only constant factor here are victims,' says Mohagher Iqbal, chairman of the MILF information committee. Government is subverting the language of mass violence statistically.

"A more grim reminder is the light such episodes shed on the Marcos martial rule of three decades ago on September 21, 1972. The nation watched Estrada's call to 'all out war' of April 27, 2000 an entirely different scenario from the Arroyo's attacks on Buliok on February 11, 2003.

"Worst still a key scare tactic of the military and police operatives in the field is picking off some local suspects. Then follow the screaming and crying part from types of

attack by reprisals. 'Most villagers cannot stay in doors for personal safety' according to local residents, adding that 'many more move to evacuation centers to avoid heavy artillery shelling.'

"Speaking to an assessment group on 'the AFP excessive use of force,' the MILF chairman Al Haj Murad Ibrahim told them: 'I keep saying to myself, 'Our people's armed struggle survived under worst conditions' what political capital is there left of a presidency with declining popularity?' The simple answer is no civilian police are able to sustain operation only in functioning systems. In the past, the military forces on the ground suffered from 'civilian revenge killings' and 'reverse ethnic feuds.' They had experienced relatives who were victimized later attack the groups associated with their former oppressors.

"Surviving a natural calamitous flood or other catastrophes may be part of the human condition' Datu Michael Mastura told the Luwaran news website. But coping with stress from shell shock is audacity in the battlefield, he said. Commenting however on noncombatants he added, 'Civilians have to be taught as much as to believe that survival is negotiable, if they can imagine they are in drill mood.'

"That is the psychological part in warfare and yet 'with short tempers and short budgets' Malacanang would need to explain itself more and more as a responsibility to the people.

"Meanwhile in the capital region lawyer Mastura got entangled with stalwarts of the Opposition—namely, the deposed President 'Erap' Estrada and two former senators, Franklin Drilon and Orlando Mercado. Along with former chief negotiator Rodolfo Garcia, lawyer Soliman Santos and woman activist Yasmin Busran-Lao, they were invited as discussants for a public on the 'Government-Moro Conflict: Is there an end in sight?'

Impliedly, lawyers Mastura and

Santos in their discussion papers went on to ask, if negotiation will come with the next administration?

"The harder task fell on Professor Solita Monsod to moderate the re-assessment of the recommendations of the 2005 Philippine Human Development Report on peace and security. The Human Development Network Foundation sponsored the public forum last Friday, September 19, at the UP School of economics Auditorium to assess its relevance in light of current events.

"Few would dispute that Estrada should be enjoying his pardon from Arroyo after being convicted from a crime of plunder. Not so apparently from his boastful script, 'I won the war against the MILF and overrun their 40 camps. Their leader Salamat Hashim fled to Malaysia.' At one point turning to General Garcia, he chided him, 'you were not part of the operation.'

"But Yasmin Busran-Lao cut short Erap to say, it was in fact an empty victory because the noncombatants ended the easy enemy targets more than the MILF forces. Datu Mastura corrected this blockbuster actor's musings publicly for the wrong information feed to him by some officers and cabinet men, none of whom was a Muslim.

"The participants seemed mostly amused by the encounter on human insecurity. 'It's hard for Estrada to grasp the argument in historical context' explained Mastura later, 'why a typical Moro respects the Filipino flag but cannot identify with it as a symbol.' Erap may be taken aback 'but the guy is far from alone.' When soldiers mounted the national color on top of the minaret of the mosque in Camp Busra, the offense on Muslim sensitivities reverberated in the Islamic world.

"One student noted it was too much for him to muster enough understanding of birthright to a distinct Bangsamoro identity defined in the MOA-AD. This entailed Mastura to further clarify that a Fili-

pino was 'originally a Creole implicated with the designation of being subject of King Philip that Muslims persistently object to the present generation.'

"The chief lines of debate shifted to the agreed text couched in coded language to gloss over the constitution. During the TRO hearing before the Supreme Court, Drilon argued in behalf of the intervenors opposed to the signing of MOA-AD. At this forum on human security and armed conflict, besides the constitutional challenge it posed, Drilon ascribed again a separatist Islamic state goal to the BJE. This comment invited uproar from some of the 200 participants who knew there is no mention like dismemberment in MOA-AD. Admittedly the new formula does not yet form part of our traditional political vocabulary.

"Professor Monsod had to call on Soliman Santos to read from the PHDR that referred to the MILF 'maximum long-term aspiration with Islam as a way of life and governance.' But as it turns out Drilon read this context into the MOA-AD prompting Datu Mastura to ask, 'What in your mind is the idea of an Islamic state?' It is suspicious angst that aborted the hope for peace triggering frustration of the MILF two commanders. Government has accepted the concept of BJE argued Mastura. The final settlement is union but the MOA profers necessary associative dynamic to form agreed structures and the building of consent.

"The impeached president for a moment mumbled that some of those present were also complicit in his ouster. 'Nobody wins in patriot games when the army plays politics,' Mastura recalls adding it spawned a variety of conspiracy theories. Asked about AFP officers and men that feasted on roasted pig (lechon) at the MILF Bides academy hall-cum mosque in Camp Abu Bakar, he said they made empty gestures of triumph."

Cleric says Mickey Mouse not Satan's agent

CAIRO: An Egyptian Muslim scholar has called for an end to risible religious edicts after a Saudi cleric said Mickey Mouse was an agent of Satan who should die, local media reported on Wednesday.

Sheikh Mohamed al-Munajjid, a cleric who often appears on Saudi television and who is also a former Saudi diplomat in the United States, said last week that mice were "agents of Satan" and should be killed.

"Sharia [Islamic law] calls for the extermination of all mice. That includes the rodents as well as 'the famous cartoon mouse,'" he said.

He blamed Mickey Mouse for causing people to become soft on mice.

However, Suad Saleh, a woman preacher who hosts a popular television program on fatwas, or religious edicts, told the English-language daily Egyptian Gazette that Munajjid's ruling "tamishes Islam's image."

"An edict should be based on knowledge, logic and reason," she said. "Yes, mice should be killed when seen according to Islam's teachings. But it is illogical to deal with a cartoon character as a live mouse and kill it."

In 2005, the former dean of Egypt's Al-Azhar University, the world's oldest Islamic seat of learning, said in a widely criticized ruling that nudity during sex annuls a couple's marriage.

Saleh said Muslim clerics should learn to become more media savvy.

Earlier this month, another Saudi cleric said owners of satellite television channels that broadcast "immoral" content deserved to die.

AFP

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