



Peace Efforts for a Peaceful Mindanao

There is still a reason for optimism for the long-festering Mindanao problem in the Philippines to move towards a peaceful resolution.

The country was pleased when the Australian government announced its help in keeping peace and development in Mindanao by providing funds amounting to \$2 million. The said money will be handed to the Southern Philippines Council for Peace and Development by the United Nations.

The AusAID is further expected to provide \$100 million worth of health, water, and agricultural projects in the coming years. Moreover, the funds will also be used to support other emergency programs in the region.

A peace accord was

signed by the Philippine Government and the Moro National Liberation Front, which hopes to end the armed conflict in Southern Philippines which started in 1980s. This accord made the local government, the private sector and the international donors including Australia, intact in keeping the people in Mindanao, particularly the Muslim and the Christian communities, at peace.

Meanwhile, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, which has been engaged in negotiations with the administration of President Gloria Arroyo for some three years, during which time a truce between government forces and rebels discussions seem to have born fruit and some 30 years of bitter conflict in which more than 100,000 people have

been slain, may be coming to an end. With both sides hailing the compromise deal as "a breakthrough," plans are now going ahead for technical discussions in advance of formal peace talks in a few months.

Sources: Philippine Daily Inquirer ; <http://www.ausaid.gov.au/media/release.cfm?BC=Medi>

http://www.ausaid.gov.au/media/release.cfm?BC=Media&ID=929_3943_5737_7262_4086



One of the temporary settlements in war zone Mindanao which is expected to receive assistance from the AusAID.

Israeli-Palestinian conflict worsens, US and UE mediate

The road map or the latest Middle East peace effort has turned into a week of violence leaving behind dozens of dead bodies of both Israelites and Palestinians.

Due to this event, the United States and the European Union continue to aid the two countries. US Secretary of State Colin Powell appealed to both prime ministers of the countries to cooperate and not to miss out the opportunity for peace to lessen the violence. Meanwhile, the EU said to help the Palestinians as long as a future Hamas-led government commits

itself to seeking peace with Israel because Hamas, which has carried out nearly 60 suicide bombings since a Palestinian uprising began in 2000, is on an EU list of banned terrorist groups.

Last year, EU funded the Palestinians with 500 million euros (\$898.95 million), making them the biggest donor to the natives while the US has given more than US\$1.5 billion (\$2.22 billion) in aid to the Palestinians since 1993 and had budgeted US\$234 million for 2006.

In a joint statement, the EU foreign ministers

said they expected the new Palestinian Legislative Council to back the creation of a government "committed to a peaceful and negotiated solution of the conflict with Israel". The US on the other hand says that they will continue the peace process and that the road map will remain intact.

Sources: <http://www.nzherald.com>

<http://www.southpeacenews.com>

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EDITORIAL: A BETTER FUTURE

by Mary Glane Manalo

THE NATION went through a politically troubled, economically depressed 2005, but it seems that things will be looking up this year. We've seen some encouraging signs weeks before the end of last year: The peso ended the year with a bang, rising to a two-and-a-half year high of 53.03

against the dollar. It was boosted by increased remittances from overseas Filipino workers and market optimism created by the government's improving fiscal position. Overseas workers' remittances are expected to remain at about the same level this year, unless some big, disruptive event occurs in the Middle East or other parts of the world where many Filipinos are working.



Whatever happens this year, the Filipinos' hopefulness, optimism and resilience can be expected to see them through hard and troubled times.

On the political front, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo survived her worst political crisis last year but the question about the legitimacy of her

presidency has not been resolved. The opposition can be expected to mount a new impeachment move soon after the regular session of Congress opens in July. The renewed political turmoil can be expected to have some effect again on

the economy.

Despite their poverty and wretched condition in life, most Filipinos remain an eternally happy, contented people. and "life-satisfaction" scores.

The Filipinos' optimism and resilience helped them survive the darkest days. Peace will still prevail.

Sports for peace and development by: Jovi Hodrial

Getting educated and educating through sports was the theme for the 2004's **European Year of Educating through Sports** held in Vienna, Austria. The international convention, attended by about 130 participants (experts and athletes) from 17 different countries (of which 6 were non-European), tackled the subject of sports as a tool for peace education. Their common ideas indicated sports as "an essential component of our society," capable of transmitting "all the basic rules of social life", and promoting the basic educational values of **tolerance, team spirit and loyalty.**"

This *Sportsmeet* Initiative, which is a new worldwide activity of the Focolare Movement has emerged from the Movement's sports sector. It pooled together all that contribute to developing a sports mindset oriented towards building universal brotherhood.



"We are determined to help Liberia," Bush.

Even the United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan, on his way to the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, also promoted sports for peace and development in Europe by visiting major athletic organizations. Addressing the Olympics staff, he said that governments have begun to take the potential of sports seriously following the designation of 2005 as the International Year of Sports and Physical Education and other such initiatives.

Annan further continued the sports theme in Davos at the opening media lunch on the subject "The Impact of Sports in the World."

Source: <http://www.irna.ir/en/news/view/menu-235/0601258376113815.htm>
<http://www.focolare.org>