

Muslims join Catholic feast



Philippines - Dancers carrying the image of Child Jesus

Participation in Sto Niño festival to promote peaceful co-existence, they say.

Muslims in Mindanao took part in a traditional Catholic festival for the first time at the weekend highlighting a growing desire for reconciliation and peaceful coexistence on the restive island.

They joined the 34th “halad” celebration, a two-day feast honoring Sto Niño (Child Jesus), in Midsayap, in North Cotabato province.

Muslim villagers from Mamasapano in nearby Maguindanao province, along with local revelers, began the festival on Saturday with traditional dancing along the major streets of Midsayap.

One of the Muslim participants said they wanted to join the festivities as a show of solidarity and to promoting interfaith interaction so “peaceful coexistence” can prevail among Muslims, Christians and indigenous people in the majority Catholic nation.

Kamsa, another Muslim participant, said he did not mind that some of his “Christian brethren” in the parade were carrying images of Sto Niño.

“After all, we Muslims revere Jesus as one of the great Messengers of Allah,” Kamsa said, as he thanked Midsayap mayor, Manuel Rabara, for inviting them to the feast.

The feast ended yesterday with a communal dinner comprising local dishes many of which were

cooked and offered free of charge by local households.

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