

## National Economic and Development Authority

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### Santos urges private sector to penetrate global halal market

Acting NEDA Director-General Augusto B. Santos urged private businesses to continue exploring prospects in the global halal market in line with the Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan (MTPDP).

“We are encouraging the Philippine private sector to find out if there are opportunities for Philippine businesses to go into the global halal market,” Santos said during the recent visit of new Pakistan ambassador to the Philippines Mohsin Razi in NEDA.

Halal products are food and non-food items sanctioned under Islamic law as ritually fit to be sold or served to Muslims.

Santos said that in the current MTPDP, Mindanao is envisioned to be the center for halal food production, with the intention of tapping the emerging export markets for halal food products.

Pakistan, being the second largest Muslim country in the world, is one of the potential markets for the export of halal products, Santos said.

During the courtesy visit, Razi said that the Philippines and Pakistan were among the first countries to establish foreign relations in 1949.

Both countries are also known in the international community for their innovative approaches towards peace and development through interfaith dialogue, the Pakistan ambassador added.

In 2006 to 2008, the Philippines and Pakistan jointly tabled in the UN General Assembly three resolutions entitled “Promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace.” All of them were adopted by consensus.

Razi said that the 17-member delegation of the Bishops-Ulama Conference (BUC) will visit Pakistan this week, upon the invitation of President Asif Ali Zardari, to learn about the country’s peace process and how these could be done in Mindanao.

The BUC, which was tapped by the Philippine government to spearhead a civil society initiative for peace and development in Mindanao, is composed of Mindanao members of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines, Ulama League of the Philippines, and the National Council of Churches of the Philippines.

Razi also expressed his government's desire to be a full dialogue partner with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and reiterated Pakistan's support for the Philippines' bid to become an observer in the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC).

Razi was previously posted in New York as Consul-General from 2006 to 2009. He was then assigned in Manila starting October last year.

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