# Formal peace gab with MILF to start early January

Formal peace talks between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) are expected to start first week of January next year in Kuala Lumpur.

Chief government peace negotiator Silvestre Afable said there would be a short period of exploratory talks in the Malaysian capital before moving on to the formal opening of the peace talks with the secessionist group.

"We are now facing three distinct phases, one of which is the peace talks proper which is expected to start first week of January," Afable said.

Two other phases in the talks, he said, are the ceasefire and rehabilitation processes.

In the ceasefire process, Afable said the advance party of the ceasefire monitoring team, is expected to arrive in Mindanao on Monday.

"This is a seven-man team of Malaysian officers who will look at the terrain and determine the facilities and other things they would need for their ceasefire monitoring team. After this, we expect that the main body of the ceasefire monitoring team will be deployed," he said.

Afable said President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo would bring "the message of peace in Mindanao" during her official visit to Bahrain.

The rehabilitation process, Afable said, is being done through the multilateral trust fund being spearheaded by the World Bank that is expected to be infused after the peace accord is signed.

"The World Bank, at this point, is setting up with what they call the joint need assessment to determine the specific projects that would be implemented after the accord is signed," he said.

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