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# MERDEKA

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## Bangsamoro delegates highlight BARMM's economic potential at Dubai Expo | Kasan Usop, Jr.

Photo courtesy of Regional BBOI

COTABATO CITY—The Regional Bangsamoro Board of Investment (BBOI) seized the opportunity to showcase potential investments in BARMM at the 9th Annual International Conference and Exhibition 2023 held on May 1-3, at Grand Hyatt Dubai, Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

The event provided a platform for BBOI to open more doors to investments in BARMM, with the team inviting participants to explore the region's beauty and immerse themselves in its diverse range of industries.

Represented by Chairperson Mohamad Omar Pasigan, Member of the Board of Governor Datu Habib Ambolodto,

and Bangsamoro Economic Zones Authority (BEZA) Executive Director Atty. Sukarno Abas, BBOI emphasized that BARMM is a thriving hub of innovation, progress, and growth.

"Our region is more than just a pretty face. It is a thriving hub of innovation, progress, and growth, with a diverse range of industries that provide endless opportunities for businesses of all sizes," said Pasigan.

Pasigan added that it is home to cutting-edge technology companies, leading research institutions, world-renowned universities, and a range of innovative startups that are

making waves in the global economy.

The event was attended by more than 1000 participants, including free zone delegations, senior policymakers, global business leaders, multilateral organizations, investors, and academics from over 100 countries around the world.

With the theme "Global Trade 2.0: Zones, An Ecosystem of Trust Driving Prosperity," the event was spearheaded by the World Free Zones Organization (World FZO), a global association representing the interest of free zone

stakeholders.

According to BBOI Chairperson Pasigan, "We persuaded them to consider making an investment in the region because when they do, they will be investing in a brighter future for themselves, their businesses, and the Bangsamoro community as a whole."

With multidimensional changes in economic, social, and technological spheres, the expo was a crucial tool to engage with counterparts and peers internationally to exchange ideas, share information, and have strategic discussions.

## Bangsamoro athlete strikes gold at 32nd SEA Games in Phnom Penh, Cambodia

By Kasan Usop, Jr.

COTABATO CITY—The Bangsamoro Sports Commission (BSC) congratulated Fatima Juwak Amirul, a native of Tawi-Tawi province, for her outstanding performance in the 32nd South East Asian (SEA) Games held from May 5 to May 17 in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

Amirul, a member of the Philippine Women's Soft Tennis Team, clinched a gold medal at the event, bringing honor to the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) and the Philippines.

The BSC commended Amirul for her hard work,



Photo courtesy of Fatima Amirul

dedication, and perseverance, which have paid off with her exceptional athletic abilities and her spirit of teamwork, sportsmanship, and national pride.

The BSC noted that Amirul's victory is a testament to the Philippines' commitment to sports excellence and praised

her for her contribution to the sport of soft tennis.

"Your hard work, dedication, and perseverance have paid off, and we are all incredibly proud of you! Your victory is not only a testament to your exceptional athletic abilities but also to your spirit of teamwork, sportsmanship, and national pride," BSC's Facebook post reads.

Amirul's triumph is a milestone for the Philippines at the SEA Games, where over 12,000 participants from 11 countries compete in more than three dozen sports disciplines.

The 32nd SEA Games is the first time Cambodia has hosted the event, which was postponed from its original schedule in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Amirul's victory is a source of pride for the Bangsamoro people and the entire Philippines, inspiring future generations of athletes to strive for excellence and bring honor to the country.

The BSC expressed its gratitude to Amirul and all the Philippine athletes who competed in the 32nd SEA

Games, hoping that their success would inspire more support and investment in the country's sports industry.

"You have brought honor and glory to our country, and we are grateful for your contributions to the sport of soft tennis [...] keep up the fantastic work, and may the future endeavors be just as successful and fulfilling," BSC further stated.

Meanwhile, Amirul expressed her gratitude on her Facebook account, stating that their months of preparation for the SEA Games had finally paid off with a gold medal and a historic achievement.

"After months of preparing for SEA games, we reached our goal of getting the gold medal and making history. It feels surreal, a dream come true. I'm still on cloud nine. This is an unforgettable experience and a significant milestone in my life," Amirul said.

"I would like to thank everyone for their endless support. It all means a lot to me, reading your comments and messages encouraged me to keep going when I felt down," she added.

## BARMM-wide sports meet begins; ignites spirit of unity, friendship, sportsmanship among athletes

By Myrna Tepadon

COTABATO CITY—In a grand display of unity, friendship, and sportsmanship, the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao Athletic Association (BARMMAA) Meet commenced on May 25, 2023, bringing together athletes from all across the Bangsamoro region.

A vibrant and colorful parade filled the streets of Cotabato City's Sinsuat Avenue, signifying the official commencement of this prestigious sporting event. Around 11,000 delegates, including athletes, coaches, officials, and enthusiasts from various parts of BARMM, participated in the parade.

BARMMAA, an event highly anticipated by sports enthusiasts, is set to provide a platform for the Bangsamoro youth to showcase their inherent talents in various athletic disciplines, and will serve as a stage to exhibit their prowess in the field of sports.

A wide array of sports will be played across different courts and fields in the city, including archery, arnis, athletics, badminton, baseball, boxing, chess, basketball, billiards, football, futsal, paragames, pencak silat, sepak takraw, softball, swimming, table tennis, taekwondo, volleyball, wrestling, and wushu.

The Ministry of Basic, Higher and Technical Education (MBHTE) took the lead in organizing the 5-day sports activities from May 25 to 29, under the theme: "Sustaining the Gains of Peace and Unity through Sports."

MBHTE Minister Mohagher Iqbal said the sports and physical education hold significant importance in the Bangsamoro region for three main reasons: promoting the health and well-being of learners, imparting essential life lessons, and fostering an environment conducive to genuine peace and reconciliation.

"The purpose of BARMMAA 2023 is to showcase na magaling ang Bangsamoro, hindi lamang intellectually but also physically—that the Bangsamoro are well recognized in sports and fitness in the future arena in the Philippines, Southeast Asia, and in the world," Iqbal said.

Representatives from 11 divisions participated in the event, including Maguindanao del Sur, Maguindanao del Norte, Lanao del Sur I and II (including Marawi City Division), Basilan (including Lamitan City Division), Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, Cotabato City Division, and Special Geographic Area Division.

BARMM Chief Minister Ahod Ebrahim emphasized the commitment of the Bangsamoro Government to support

and promote physical education in the region.

"I urge you all to continue to excel in your fields of sports that embody the ideals of Moral Governance, which are founded in the inclusion, equity, and justice," said Ebrahim.

The city of Cotabato has been granted the esteemed privilege of hosting this year's BARMMAA tournament.

Mayor Mohammad Ali Matabalao expressed his gratitude for the opportunity and emphasized the city's readiness to organize a remarkable event.

"Cotabato city is truly honored to be the host of this year BARMMAA, at kahit taon-taong pa na sabihin ng

MBHTE na Cotabato City lang [ang host], hangga't ako pa ang mayor—Minister (Iqbal), please consider Cotabato City as venue," said Matabalao.

The Mayor also encouraged the participants of BARMMAA 2023 to carry the spirit of competition beyond the tournament.

"Sa inyo na mga kalahok sa BARMMAA 2023, pagkatapos ng kompetisyong ito, sana maging bitbit niyong pabaon—hindi natatapos ang laban sa tunog ng pito, sa hudyat ng batingaw o pagtapak sa finish line, hindi nagtatapos ang inyong laban sa palaro dahil marami pang pagsubok sa tunay na buhay at kalakhang lipunan ang makakaharap niyo," he said.



Photo by Marhom Ibrahim