

# MERDEKA

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## BARMM's significant accomplishments in 2022: a yearend review

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BARMM's significant accomplishments in 2022: a yearend review

COTABATO CITY—The Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim (BARMM) Government ensured adequate services in 2022 by providing more public infrastructure projects, decent housing units, fostering employment and investment opportunities, advancing high-quality education programs, cultivating peace and security conditions, and improving resiliency and preparedness.

During the previous year, the Government of the Day accomplished the following

great feats despite the difficulties posed by natural disasters and global crises:

### Ensured greater access to social services

To serve more families and individuals in need, the Office of the Chief Minister (OCM) implemented various special programs such as providing cash support addressing and improving well-being focusing on health, and socio-economic development to provide the short and long-term needs of the Bangsamoro people.

Despite the challenges brought about by the global pandemic, the OCM's flagship

program the Tulong Alay sa Bangsamorong Nangangailangan or Project TABANG has continuously addressed not just the health but also the socio-economic impact of the crisis on the lives of Bangsamoro people.

Project TABANG is a humanitarian program created to alleviate the situation of Bangsamoro communities. It has served communities and benefited hundreds of thousands of grassroots individuals and families.

Recently, more than 5,000 Basileños received the services of various BARMM ministries and other concerned stakeholders as part of the TABANG Convergence

Program, aiming to bring the government closer to the people.

Another government initiative under the Ministry of Social and Security Development (MSSD) is the Bangsamoro Critical Assistance to Indigents in Response to Emergency Situations (B-CARES) program which has a total of 13 partner hospitals. It already served a total of 4,861 indigent patients from this hospital across the Bangsamoro region.

At least 66,279 learners in 1,702 daycare or child

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## BARMM launches Bangsamoro Education Reform and Development Plan 2035

DAVAO CITY—To provide the best learning journey for the Bangsamoro learners, the Ministry of Basic, Higher, and Technical Education (MBHTE) launched here Dec. 5, the Bangsamoro Education Reform and Development Plan (BERDP) 2035.

BERDP 2035 serves as the leading document in formulating education plans and policies in the Bangsamoro region until 2035. It is anchored on the seven principles of inclusivity, equity, rights-based, rooted in context, integrated, balanced, and moral governance.

The launching of the education plan was one of the highlights of MBHTE's first ever education summit held Monday.

Education Summit Focal Alfadhar Pajiji underscored during the launching that the

policy document is part of the quest to further improve the education system in the region.

"The BERDP is developed due to MBHTE's vision of ensuring responsive, quality, integrated, and balanced education for the Bangsamoro," said Pajiji.

As provided in the policy briefer, BERDP has four overarching policy goals—access and participation, quality and relevance, governance, and equity.

These overarching policy goals will ensure inclusive and equitable access, participation, quality, relevant, and responsive education reform education for all learners. Further, it will ensure ethical governance at all levels of education and systematic and gradual institutionalization of Madaris educational system in Bangsamoro region.

As a backgrounder, Pajiji disclosed that BERDP all started in 2019 with the support of United Nation Children's Fund (UNICEF) and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

Pajiji noted that BERDP is also parallel to the Basic Education Development Plan (BEDP) 2030 of the Department of Education in which both plans aimed at achieving the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) number four on quality education established by the United Nations in September 2015.

In her message of support, UNICEF Country Representative in the Philippines Oyunsai Khan Dendevnorov expressed their continued support for the region.

"We are one with the Bangsamoro Government in welcoming all children back



Photo by Faisal Camsa, Jr.

to school – including those with disabilities, the internally displaced, and the members of indigenous communities," Oyun said.

Oyun stressed that "every day in the classroom is a chance to build a stronger, more efficient, and inclusive educational system towards realizing the rights of every child". **(Abdullah Matucan/BIO)**



Photo by Morsid Kadir

DATU ODIN SINSUAT, Maguindanao del Norte — To ease the trauma and pain caused by tropical storm Paeng to internally displaced children at this town's Barangay Kusiong – the storm's ground zero in the region, Bangsamoro Government conducted an outreach activity on Nov. 11.

Led by the Ministry of Social Services and Development (MSSD), the activity was also

in line with this year's celebration of the National Children's Month.

The celebration's theme in BARMM is "Bangon Batang Bangsamoro", which, according to the MSSD, "encapsulates and amplifies the efforts of the Bangsamoro Government's interventions to address the rights of the child on development, protection, survival, and participation, with a

## BARMM reaches out to children displaced by Paeng on Nat'l Children's Month celeb

special focus on children who bore the brunt of Typhoon Paeng."

Children aged 3-15 years who were staying at evacuation centers in the area were treated to a storytelling activity, parlor games and talent show, and Mental Health Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) activity. They were also provided with toys, school supplies, and hygiene kits.

"Yung mga bata, malaki yung ating pag-asa na ibinigay sa kanila na maging active, productive, and healthy citizens [...] gusto po natin matingnan yung kanilang kalagayan at mabigyan ng kung ano mang intervention ang kakayanin na maibigay sa kanila," said MSSD Minister Raissa Jajurie.

The Ministry of Health also joined the activity by bringing its diagnostic mobile clinic, while

the Bangsamoro Planning and Development Authority provided meals for the children.

"Sobrang masaya po ako na nakatanggap ang anak ko nitong mga gamit at nagpapasalamat po ako sa MSSD at sa lahat ng tumulong ngayon," said Jemma Laganding, 38, one of the IDPs.

Members of the Regional Committee for the Welfare of Children (RCWC) and Regional Juvenile Justice and Welfare Council (RJJWC), local government unit of DOS, Philippine Red Cross, and other humanitarian groups also supported the activity.

Minister Jajurie said MSSD will conduct similar activity to different orphanages in Cotabato City, Special Geographic Area, and other provinces. **(Myrna Tepadan)**

## 22nd Gawad KALASAG: 16 BARMM-LGUs bag excellence awards on disaster risk reduction

COTABATO CITY—Sixteen (16) local government units (LGUs) across BARMM were recognized for their excellent and outstanding efforts on local Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM) in a ceremony held Dec. 2, in this city.

The event, dubbed as the 22nd Gawad KALASAG (Kalamidad at Sakuna Labanan, Sariling Galing ang Kaligtasan) Seals Awards and led by The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) and Office of Civil Defense (OCD-BARMM), aimed to recognize the local DRRM councils and offices, government response teams, civil society organizations (CSOs), volunteer organizations and individuals who make exemplary contributions in the field of DRRM and climate change adaptation.

National Secretary of the Department of Interior and Local Government Atty. Benjamin "Benhur" Abalos Jr. congratulated and recognized all the honorees' significant efforts while emphasizing the actions to be taken before, during and after the disaster.

"We are all Filipinos here, working together not just during the crisis [...] hindi tayo magpapahuli [dahil] magaling tayo,

importante ay nagtutulungan tayong lahat, galingan natin," Abalos said.

The highest government award "Beyond Compliant" was given to Municipality of Upi, Maguindanao del Norte.

Meanwhile, the towns of Parang, South Upi, Paglat, Ampatuan, Datu Abdullah Sangki, and Sultan sa Barongis in Maguindanao; Bubong, Piagapo, and Wao in Lanao del Sur; Lamitan City and Tuburan in Basilan; and Talipao in Sulu were awarded for being "Fully Compliant".

Furthermore, Jolo Emergency Rescue Network (JERN) Inc. was also awarded as Regional Best Government Emergency Management and Response Teams (GEMs).

Plaques of appreciation were given to the Bangsamoro DRRM Council member agencies as well as DRRM Partners from both the Public and the Private Sectors.

Bangsamoro Civil Defense Regional Director Hamid Bayao pointed out that the purpose of said event was to emphasize that OCD-BARMM provides responsive, efficient and effective services related to research,

planning, programming, project development and policy formulation of DRRM's projects and activities.

"Ang Gawad KALASAG ay ang flagship program ng NDRRMC, sa pangunguna ng OCD-BARMM, nalayong palakasin at pagtibayin ang bawat pamilya, komunidad, mga institusyon, at establisimiyento upang tayo ay maging matatag, resilient sa mga sakuna at bantang panganib," Bayao said.

Director General Engr. Khalid Dumagay, who represented Interior and Local Government Minister Atty. Naguib Sinarimbo, praised the awardees, saying, "You have proven that we, in the BARMM, can cope with the best LGUs in the country by working together despite complex and complicated transitions while we are currently undergoing both natural and man-made calamities."

"In Moral Governance, we mean, we will try our very best to make sure that our decision

making process and the decisions we made are geared towards one and the same goal matatag, maginhawa at panatag na buhay of Bangsamoro and the whole Filipino nation," he added.

The NDRRMC, through the National Gawad Kalasag Committee, said there are 135 beyond compliant and 436 fully compliant local government awardees this year. **(Johaira Sahidala)**



Photo by Marhom Ibrahim



Photo by Hamdan Badrudin

COTABATO CITY—The Government of the Day is pushing for the creation of Bangsamoro Regional Institutes for Higher Islamic Studies to uplift Madaris Education in the region.

During the Bangsamoro Transition Authority's (BTA) regular session on Nov. 21, the BTA Bill No. 31 or an "Act creating the Bangsamoro Regional Institutes for Higher Islamic Studies, repealing Muslim Mindanao Autonomy Act No. 164, otherwise known as the Regional Madrasah Graduate Education Act of 2003",

## BTA pushes for creation of higher Islamic studies

was advanced in the parliament.

Representing the Government of the Day, Member of Parliament (MP) Mohagher Iqbal said the bill will help improve educational perspective, strategies, and structure that will surely produce graduates who are competitive locally and globally by having a solid understanding of Islam and the modern world.

"It is the time for the Government of the Day to promote and institutionalize an educational institution capable of providing quality education at par with secular education, which would be representative of our religion as Muslims," Iqbal, who also heads the education ministry in the region, stressed.

Under Section 8, Article IX of R.A.

11054, also known as the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL), Bangsamoro Government has the authority over education, and skills training, and culture and languages, as well as the competence to establish, maintain, and supervise Madaris Education in the BARMM.

Iqbal further expressed that in reality, the Bangsamoro Asatids and Ulama are not properly regarded as professionals because "they do not squarely fit in the socially-constructed box of standards that we created to be called professionals."

"While others are seeking doctorates and degrees that they can use to advance in their careers, these Asatids and Ulama devote their lives studying our religion, surviving with

a low income and without expecting worldly returns. Little do we know that this is far better compared to our mediocre ambitions in this Dunya," he said.

The proposed bill will help promote training in Islamic education and conduct research on the development of textbooks and other reading materials for Madaris Institutions at all levels.

The Madaris Education, according to the Lawmaker, has a relevant impact on the spiritual development of the Bangsamoro people and it produces good citizens who live by moral principles and Islamic values, ensuring that in the end, the teachings of Islam are applied in all aspects of lives. **(Johaira Sahidala)**

## BTA ensures inclusive decision-making among stakeholders for proposed Local Governance Bill

TAWI-TAWI—To enhance the provisions of the proposed Bangsamoro Local Governance Code (BLGC), the Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA) held here a public consultation with various government stakeholders on Dec. 6.

One of BTA's priority bills, the BLGC or Parliament Bill No. 30, aims to replace and repeal the Muslim Mindanao Autonomy Act (MMAA) No. 25 or the Local Government Code of the ARMM of 1994 otherwise known as the "Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao Local Government Code; and subsisting laws on elections and other electoral matters shall apply in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region.

During the consultation, Member of Parliament (MP) Mohammad Kelie Antao, as the presiding chair, emphasized to the local chief executives and other government stakeholders of Tawi-Tawi in attendance that their reactions, positions, stands, comments or suggestions about the bill will provide key notes for discussions in the next committee hearing and during the plenary session for possible inclusion in the bill.

"We (MPs) are currently roaming around for public consultation so that we could get some good points or brilliant ideas that will serve as our additional inputs in the discussions or arguments before the final enactment of this bill," Antao said.



Photo by Hamdan Badrudin

"We have been struggling hard for more than 40 years now, crafting this another priority bill forms part of our continuous struggle. If we succeed in enacting this law under the principles of 'Moral Governance' of our Chief Minister Ahod Ebrahim, this will certainly certify the fruit and legacy of our struggle and self-determination," he added.

"Let us raise our ideas and we will hear you. Together, we should craft this law for the sake of our generation's well-being so that they will not experience the same cycles of conflict and violence that we had in the past," MP Antao further added.

The code includes the general provisions which contain statements of policies, processes, and mechanisms for effective local governance; Local Taxation and Fiscal Matters; Bangsamoro Constituent Units; Miscellaneous and Final Provisions which contain penal provisions, provisions on review and implementing mechanisms & transitory provisions; and devolution or transfer of the responsibility for the delivery of various aspects of basic services to Bangsamoro

constituent units.

The proposed bill also maintains the transfer of certain regulatory and licensing powers to the Bangsamoro constituent units; upgrades & incorporates existing statutes that are primordial to the functions of the Bangsamoro constituent units such as the Magna Carta of Women, National Disaster Risk Reduction & Management Act, Government Procurement Act; and increases the financial resources available to Bangsamoro constituent units by providing each constituent unit a specific share of the national wealth exploited in the area in the region, pursuant to the Mandanas ruling in 2019 which increases the share of all local government in the country from a low 11% to as much as 40%.

Meanwhile, Bongao Mayor Jimuel Que stressed, "my stand still needs a further study, further research and more on collection of data in order to enhance the bill with a provisions that is more fair to existing local government units."

For MP Eddie Alih, "hearing several relevant

suggestions and recommendations in this consultation enriches our minds and outlook for the bill, rest assure that we will include all of this bright opinions in the coming committee discussions to have a more enhanced and acceptable local governance code."

Some of the major highlights of comments raised during the consultation included the issue of clarifying the provision on devolution, strengthening the measure on anti-dynasty provision and preventive suspension of government officials, Educational Requirements and terms of office for elective officials, computation of share taxes and Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA), the provision on the protection of children and among others.

MP Dr. Susana Anayatin said, "I am submitting myself wholeheartedly to support the bill because I believe that the current existing laws are not enough to meet the full scale of peace and development in the Bangsamoro region." **(Kasan Usop, Jr.)**



Photo by Morsid Kadir

## BARMM sustains record for lowest inflation rate in October; ties with Region 12

COTABATO CITY—Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) maintained its record as the region with the lowest inflation rate nationwide at 6.5 percent, according to Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA).

BARMM tied with Region XII or SOCCSKSARGEN with the same rating for October 2022.

To recall, BARMM's inflation rate in the previous month of September 2022 was recorded at 6.0 percent with a slight 0.5 percent increase in October.

Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) recorded the second lowest inflation rate at 6.6 percent and Region IV-A or CALABARZON was the third region with the lowest inflation rate at 6.9 percent while Region XI or Davao Region got the highest inflation rate at 9.6 percent.

The headline inflation rate in the entire

Philippines slightly rose to 0.9 percent at 7.7 percent from 6.9 percent compared to the previous month of September 2022.

"The fast acceleration of inflation rate in the Bangsamoro region was primarily due to the contribution of food and non-alcoholic beverages at 8.4 percent; housing, water, electricity, gas and other fuels at 3.4 percent; and restaurants and accommodation services at 6.4 percent," said Director Engr. Akan Sula, PSA-BARMM Officer-in-Charge.

Among the provinces in BARMM, Lanao Del Sur recorded the highest inflation rate at 9.4 percent followed by Basilan at 7.0 percent, Sulu at 6.4 percent, Tawi-Tawi at 5.3 percent, and Maguindanao with the lowest inflation rate at 4.6 percent in this month.

Meanwhile, Cotabato City has maintained its record with the lowest inflation rate in the entire Bangsamoro area at 3.6 percent. **(Kasan Usop, Jr.)**

## MOH intensifies diabetes awareness

COTABATO CITY—The Bangsamoro Government, through its Ministry of Health (MOH), is intensifying the awareness of the growing burden of diabetes and the ways to prevent its threat to health.

During the commemoration of World Diabetes Day on Nov. 14, the Ministry's Non-Communicable Diseases clusters (NCD), in partnership with Cotabato Regional Medical Center, Care Philippines, and the Rotary Club of Cotabato East, conducted free screening for blood sugar and blood pressure, risk assessment using a risk prediction chart, and diabetes self-management education.

Lectures included diabetes mellitus, sick days in diabetes, foot care management, insulin injection, diabetes mellitus diet, and hypertension awareness to BARMM employees.

MOH NCD head Dr. Ehsan Paudac stressed that the NCD cluster has an education campaign for Bangsamoro communities to give awareness of diabetes health issues.

"Halos lahat ng ating limang probinsya ay

nagkakaroon tayo ng training. Bawat RHU mayroong representative upang turuan sila kung ano ang mga tamang pamamaraan para maibahagi nila sa ating mga kababayan kung paano ma-address itong diabetes kasama na rin ang hypertension," said Dr. Paudac. He also urged the public to exercise regularly and eat healthy foods.

According to Philippine Statistics Authority's (PSA) data as of October 1, 2022, deaths due to diabetes mellitus recorded 16,970 cases or 6.5 percent share, making it the fourth leading cause of deaths in the Philippines.

MOH Deputy Minister Dr. Zul Qarney Abas emphasized that the region's health ministry and its key partners in different sectors are committed to changing the landscape of diabetes in the Bangsamoro region to ensure the quality of life for all Bangsamoro people.

This year follows the theme "Access to Diabetes Care"—a campaign represented by a blue circle logo that signifies the unity of the global diabetes community in response to the diabetes epidemic. **(Myrna Tepadan)**



Photo by Hamdan Badrudin

## BWC chair delivers 4th State of the Bangsamoro Women Address

COTABATO CITY — In her 4th State of the Bangsamoro Women Address (SOBWA), Chairperson Bainon Karon of the Bangsamoro Women Commission (BWC) proudly shared that the Commission has been steadfast in mainstreaming gender and development in the region.

"On raising awareness and building capacities of planners, policy, and decision-makers on gender and development, I am happy to share that since 2019 to present, the BWC has organized and conducted a series of training and workshops for all the ministries and offices on gender and development," Karon said.

"In 2020-2021, although the COVID-19 pandemic slowed everything, that did not stop us from installing strategic mechanisms because our ministries, offices, and agencies have hired competent people to do the job," she said.

Karon mentioned that all 29 ministries, offices, and agencies have been capacitated

on basic GAD concepts, legal imperatives, gender-responsive policy-making and budgeting, gender in Islam, preparation of GAD plans and budgets, and submission of GAD accomplishment reports including coaching and mentoring.

Karon also highlighted in her speech that BWC, along with different civil society organizations, continue to work together to provide education to the Bangsamoro communities on the practical concept of gender, their rights as women and men in Islam, and the different laws that protect the rights of women and young girls from all forms of violence.

"It is about time that our voices are heard and we make a stand against violence," she added.

Ending her speech, Karon said BWC will make a stand and uphold the rights of every woman in the Bangsamoro region. "Babae ka! Hindi 'Babae lang!'. Together, let us work harder to make BARMM VAW-free," she said.



Photo by Hamdan Badrudin

Meanwhile, in a video message, Chief Minister Ahod Ebrahim emphasized that the Bangsamoro Government recognizes the crucial contribution of women in strengthening communities, raising and nurturing families, and building nations. "I affirm that women should be given extra protection," said Ebrahim.

"I applaud the Bangsamoro Women Commission for organizing this event that demonstrates the Bangsamoro government's

sincerity in defending the rights and welfare of Bangsamoro women and empowering them to lead and protect themselves from various forms of abuse," he added.

Karon's SOBWA was the highlight of the region's kickoff celebration of the 18-day Campaign to End Violence Against Women (VAW), which runs from Nov. 25 – Dec. 12.

During the kickoff ceremony on Nov.25, employees of the Bangsamoro Government participated in an early morning parade to support the campaign. **(Myrna Tepadan)**



Photo by Faisal Camsa Jr.

COTABATO CITY—Legal experts from different offices and ministries along with the tribal leaders in the region convened on Nov. 17 in this city in preparation for the upcoming Bangsamoro Tri-Justice Summit slated January 10-12, 2023.

Through the Bangsamoro Attorney General Office (BAGO), the Government of the Day conducted the first strategic and collective action planning for the Tri-Justice Summit

chaired by BARMM Attorney-General Sha Elijah Dumama-Alba.

"We need to listen from different sectors and representatives from the Bangsamoro," Atty. Alba said, stressing the significance of collecting and drafting relevant issues and proposed topics to be tackled at the summit.

"Pagsasamahin natin ang [collected issues, suggestions, topics] para e-formulate

## Bangsamoro Gov't to craft roadmap for Tri-Justice System

and develop the Bangsamoro Justice system as it is part of the priority agenda of the Government of the Day," said Atty. Alba, who is also the floor leader of the Bangsamoro Parliament.

A Technical Working Group (TWG) was created to develop a roadmap for the promotion and development of a Tri-Justice System based on Bangsamoro's unique cultural and historical heritage under the Regular Courts, Sharia Courts, and Tribal Courts.

Meanwhile, Lawyer Yasmine Ibay-Laguialam from BAGO Legal Research and Opinion Division said the 2023 summit would pave the way for the things to be focused on in the current justice system in the region.

"Mapag-uusapan Sa Bangsamoro Tri-Justice Summit kung ano ang mga concerns, current status at dito natin mas maiintindihan

kung ano ang mga bagay na dapat tutukan sa Bangsamoro justice," she said.

The event will also aim to develop the Bangsamoro Justice framework which will be the basis for the Government of the Day's key legislation and policies from 2023 to 2025.

This is per Section 1, Article X of Republic Act (RA) No. 1154 or the Bangsamoro Organic Law which states that "the dispensation of justice in the region shall agree with the constitution, Shari'ah, tradition, tribal laws, and other relevant laws."

A total of 150 participants from different sectors are expected to attend the tri-justice summit. **(Johaira Sahidala)**

## Journey of 80 young parliamentarians commences in Bangsamoro Youth Parliament program

COTABATO CITY—Eighty young parliamentarians from different parts of the region began their legislative journey on Nov. 7, as the Bangsamoro Youth Commission (BYC) officially opened its Bangsamoro Youth Parliament (BYP) 2022 – The 13th National Youth Parliament Regional Assembly for BARMM.

BYP is a capacity-building mechanism that aims to bring together youth representatives from all provinces and sectors across the region to discuss current and emerging issues affecting the youth sector. BYC held the first batch of the same event last year.

This year's BYP will run for five days, until Nov. 11. Of the eighty participants, fifty-five (55) are male and the rest are female.

During the 5-day-event, participants will be exposed to lectures and orientation on

leadership in Islam, the Bangsamoro Peace Process, parliamentary procedures, and policy formulation/lobbying among others. They were also distributed to their respective committee assignment.

BYC Chairperson and Member of the Parliament Marjanie Macasalong cited in his inspirational message that the program "ensures that the youth are given avenues to understand and experience first-hand how parliamentary system of government works".

"This activity is a great avenue for you to exercise your technical capacities and leadership skills, and will immerse you to a new set of experiences," Macasalong said.

He added that it will also expand the youth's understanding of how the government works and deals with societal concerns specific to Bangsamoro context.



Photo by Marhom Ibrahim

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Ahod Ebrahim emphasized in his video message that the BYP is not a "venue for competing ideas". "Rather, it is a path where we find commonality as an approach towards the process of drafting more inclusive laws," he said.

In a separate press conference after the opening program, BYC Commissioner

Nasserudin Dunding shared that participants underwent a rigorous screening process prior to on boarding.

"Ini-open po natin ito sa public at dumaan po sila sa matinding proseso. Yung 80 delegates natin ngayon ay may dalang kanyang-kanyang bill at yun ang pagsusumikapang nila na madala sa plenaryo," Dunding said. **(Abdullah Matucan)**

## BARMM pays homage to Shariff Kabunsuan thru grand Guinakit Fluvial Parade



Photo by Marhom Ibrahim

COTABATO CITY—Hundreds of fleets embellished with colorful and vibrant ornaments sailed along the rivers of Kalanganan II of this city on Dec. 19, to honor the arrival of Shariff Kabunsuan in Mindanao which started the spread of Islam 500 years ago.

The highly anticipated Guinakit (a convoy of boats)—a re-enactment of the Arab missionary's arrival in the banks of 'Masla Pulangi' (now Rio Grande de Mindanao)—is said to be the grandest fluvial parade as the Regional Government of BARMM and City Government of Cotabato teamed up for the first time.

Bangsamoro Chief Minister Ahod Ebrahim expressed his joy that he witnessed the Guinakit Fluvial Parade with thousands of Cotabateños.

"I am very happy that after the struggle of the Bangsamoro, I am here with you celebrating this most important celebration of our generations," Ebrahim shared.

"This creative and meaningful ceremony is a symbol of the past journey and adventure of those who lived before us and left civilized and progressive communities and rich cultures that we take pride in and cherish until now," the Chief Minister added.

He also shared that the message of this fluvial parade goes beyond the colorful and creative designs of the boats.

"It is also a celebration of our creativity, solidarity, and resiliency [...] This day is the most important day for the Bangsamoro people as it marks the formation of our identity as Bangsamoro in this part of the country. Without the coming of Shariff Kabunsuan, Bangsamoro will never exist," Ebrahim stressed.

City Mayor Mohammad Ali Matabalao also conveyed the message of peace and unity despite diversity.

"More than the display of this colorful bancas, ang paggunita kay Shariff Kabunsuan ngayon ay isang makabuluhang okasyon dahil ito ay sumisimbolo sa hindi natitinag na pangako ng mga tao na itaguyod ang kanilang paniniwala sa relihiyong Islam habang iginagalang ang pagkakaiba-iba ng iba pang kultura, relihiyon, wika, at tradisyon," Matabalao said

"May we be reminded that other than faith, it is the message of peace and unity among those who shared the same that this festival wants us to share and remember that Cotabato City, being the crown jewel of BARMM, is truly 'Para Sa Lahat,'" he added. **(Aisah Abas/Kasan Usop, Jr./BIO)**

## BARMM highlights heritage, unity on Shariff Kabunsuan Fest 2022

COTABATO CITY—A re-enactment of the arrival of Shariff Kabunsuan to spread the teachings of Islam in Mindanao opened during the grand celebration of the Shariff Kabunsuan Festival on Dec. 15, 2022 at Cotabato State University (CotSu) Grand Stand in this city.

Carrying the theme "One Heritage, One Culture, Endless Possibilities", this year's festival aims to celebrate the unity of the people, the rich history, colorful but diverse cultures, craftsmanship, unique traditions, and spectacular sites in the Bangsamoro homeland.

The Bangsamoro Government, through its Ministry of Trade, Investments, and Tourism (MTIT), spearheaded the celebration of the said festival; and for the first time, the regional government of BARMM is jointly conducting the activity with the City Government of Cotabato.

Officials of BARMM and the City Government of Cotabato, residents of this city, and Maguindanao Provinces attended Thursday's program.

In his message read by BARMM Cabinet Secretary Mohd Asnin Pendatun, Chief Minister Ahod Ebrahim mentioned some of the qualities of Shariff Kabunsuan worth emulating.

"We take inspiration from the determination of Shariff Kabunsuan in sailing towards

the nourishment of people's faith and improvement of the lives of the people of Maguindanao and in other areas in mainland Mindanao," Ebrahim said.

He said that the message of the Shariff Kabunsuan Festival is beyond the colorful and creative preservation of the Bangsamoro cultures and traditions and the remarkable journey of the late Sultan.

"It is also a celebration of our creativity, solidarity, and resiliency. I admire the timing of this activity as it brings out enthusiasm, and ensures the endurance of our people in Cotabato City after surviving the challenges brought by pandemic and disaster," he added.

He further stressed, "we must always remember that development is built on the foundation of peace and cooperation and it is an effort in which everyone must participate. May you all enjoy the celebration of the Shariff Kabunsuan festival and allow me to mark the beginning of our journey towards freedom, long-lasting peace, and progress." Meanwhile, Cotabato City Mayor Mohammad Matabalao expressed his joy that this event celebrates not only the heritage of the Bangsamoro but also the spirit of unity.

"I have been very hopeful to see two governments work together hand in hand to celebrate our identity and our heritage that co-existed peacefully, socially, economically, politically, and even culturally with our



Photo by Morsid Kadir

highlander neighbors," Matabalao said.

"It is important to note as well how this event brings to the fore our inherent strengths as people—our kindness, our communal spirit, and our commitment and industry, of which this year's Shariff Kabunsuan Festival is sure to be bigger, brighter, and more successful than before," Matabalao added.

Also part of the opening program was the "Kuyog" Showcase Competition which was participated by schools and dance troupes from Tulunan, South Cotabato; Malabang, Lanao del Sur; Matanog, Maguindanao del Norte; Sultan Kudarat, Maguindanao del Norte; and Isulan, Sultan Kudarat.

Tulunan, North Cotabato performers won the first prize worth Php300,000.00; Isulan, Sultan Kudarat got the 2nd prize worth Php200,000.00; while performers from Sultan Kudarat, Maguindanao won the third

prize with Php100,000.00. All of the prizes were sponsored by the City Government of Cotabato.

George Kimboy, the artistic head choreographer of Sib-Sib National High School Tulunan Performers, expressed his gratitude to the Government of BARMM and Cotabato City.

"People here in BARMM and Cotabato City are hospitable, areas are peaceful [and] we are amazed about the progress of various areas we traveled. As to the prize we received, half of it will be equally shared with our dancers while the other half of it will be used to buy some props to improve our performance," Kimboy shared.

Various activities are lined up to commemorate the said festival which will run from Dec. 15 to 19. **(Kasan Usop, Jr./BIO)**

### Accomplishment from ..p.1

centers and 16,876 learners in 742 supervised neighborhood play (SNP) facilities are supported by the Ministry through the capacity building for workers, provision of learning kits and outdoor play equipment.

Meanwhile, the Government of the Day continues to support our Maranao brothers thru Marawi Rehabilitation Program (MRP) for families affected by the 2017 siege. The MRP, along with the MSSD, provided food and non-food essentials, direct subsistence grants, cash assistance, and psychosocial support to improve their socio-economic status. This also includes the 1-unit of lake ambulance and 1-unit of lake cadaver transport for the residents to expand access and availability of medical equipment.

On the available data, around 3,844 Internally Displaced Persons or IDPs beneficiaries and still counting received cash aid worth Php15,000.00 each under the Bangsamoro Sagip Kabuhayan Program, while more than thousands of beneficiaries received worth Php5,000.00 cash aid.

### Enhancing quality education and increased scholarship programs

The Bangsamoro Government pours more money into the Ministry of Basic, Higher and Technical Education (MBHTE) as it is committed to providing quality education and ensuring that "No Bangsamoro Children Are Left Behind."

Despite the pandemic, Education Ministry hired more competent teachers to ensure Bangsamoro learners are given closer attention by the teachers, built climate-resilient classrooms, and technical and vocational labs and workshops to accommodate students in time for physical classes.

Amid adjustments in the education system due to global health crises, MBHTE exceeded its target number of enrollees for School Year (S.Y.) 2022-2023 as face-to-face classes in the Bangsamoro region resumed. The education ministry initially targeted to achieve about one million enrollees in the entire BARMM for the current academic year.

As of writing, the MBHTE recorded a total of 1,038,662 enrollees for both public and private schools under the basic and higher education sectors.

Moreover, MBHTE implemented a series of scholarship programs such as the Access to Higher and Modern Education Scholarship Program (AHME-SP) which provides Php60,000.00 in assistance to student beneficiaries/scholars per academic year.

A total of 1,400 qualified students were able to benefit from this scholarship program for SY 2020-2021 while another 1,400 scholarships have been produced in 2022 to ensure at least one professional per family in Bangsamoro.

To make quality education accessible, the Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST) provided financial assistance thru its Bangsamoro Assistance for Science Education (BASE) to qualified grantees aiming for the best learning journey for the Bangsamoro learners.

Apart from that, the Education Ministry also expanded its financial subsidies for Registered public and private Madaris (Muslim schools) to Standard Madrasah Curriculum (SMC) addressing the needs of Islamic teachers, faculties as well as

learners.

Eleven (11) Schools Divisions all over the region continued to receive Learning Continuity Plan (LCP) materials and equipment which include digital duplicators, desktop computers, teachers' kits, learners' materials, and others.

The ministry also hired qualified Asatidz or Islamic Studies and Arabic Language (ISAL) teachers who deployed in various public schools. This is to ensure the integration into the education curriculum of the teaching of Islamic and Arabic studies for Muslim pupils and students.

MBHTE also launched Bangsamoro Education Reform and Development Plan (BERDP) 2035 which serves as the leading document in formulating education plans and policies in the Bangsamoro region until 2035.

The Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST) granted cash to 798 science scholars across the region as of December 2022.

From 2020 to 2022, there were 514 students benefitting from the Bangsamoro Assistance for Science Education (BASE) Program and one hundred (100) students for the BASE-Merit Program, which commenced this year. A total of 184 students were also benefitting from the Mujahideen Assistance for Science Education (MASE).

### Strengthened employment programs for the youth

In BARMM, a large number of the unemployed groups belong to the youth sector. Hence, the Ministry of Labor and Employment (MOLE) implemented a series of programs and regularly conducted a simultaneous distribution of financial assistance for thousands of beneficiaries under the Bangsamoro Child Labor Sagip Program (BCLSP), Government Internship Program (GIP), and the Special Program for the Employment of Students (SPES) as well as the repatriated overseas Bangsamoro workers.

The Bangsamoro Government through its Bangsamoro Youth Commission (BYC) has conducted and implemented several activities, programs, and projects to intensify the essence of youth as one of the priority flagships in the region.

In 2022, a total of eighty (80) Bangsamoro Youth Parliament (BYP) gathered from different areas of the BARMM region representing different sectors. BYP is a capacity-building mechanism that brings together youth representatives from all provinces and sectors across the region to discuss current and emerging issues affecting the youth sector.

Aside from the aforementioned initiatives, young combatants from the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) benefited from the Positive Peace Project (PPP) to assist transitioning youth combatants to become productive versions of themselves and potentially provide alternative lenses of development.

These youth combatants received viable socio-economic opportunities such as training on leadership, technical-vocational skills, and entrepreneurship.

Furthermore, the Bangsamoro leadership also recognizes the importance of providing relevant Technical-Vocational and Education Training (TVET). The MBHTE, through its Technical Education and Skills

Training (MBHTE-TESD), provided free relevant technical vocational training with a support fund allowance.

Among the grantees are out-of-school youth, students, and former MNLF and MILF children who graduated in the fields of tourism, agriculture, and fishery, electrical and electronics, construction, and social community development, among others.

### Intensified medical services

The Bangsamoro Government guaranteed that the health, safety, and well-being of the Bangsamoro people, especially the poor and most vulnerable sectors, is a top priority throughout the region.

Through the Ayudang Medikal Mula Sa Bangsamoro Government (AMBaG), the Government of the Day intensified its medical support for poor and indigent patients who are struggling financially in paying their hospital bills.

Currently, the AMBaG program has allocated a total of Php144 million fund, which helped 20,399 needy patients since its launch in November 2019.

From 2019 to 2022, the program has already served 38,237 clients who received assistance.

It is also worth noting that 73.69% or 28,245 of families went home from the hospital with zero balance after availing of AMBaG and other medical services. In response to the ongoing pandemic, the program has also helped 1,266 Covid-related cases.

As of 2022, the program has already disbursed Php266,933,183.00 and a total of 14 new hospitals are expected to join the roster of medical institutions under the said program.

To respond to the global health crises, BARMM implemented several programs that allowed it to resume economic and social activities without compromising people's health and safety.

As of December 19, 2022, a total of 4,154,235 doses of vaccine were administered in the region, of which 244,668 doses were used in Basilan; 1,420,452 in Lanao del Sur; 1,201,97 in Maguindanao; 563,943 from Sulu; 318,188 from Tawi-Tawi; and 405,012 from Cotabato City.

Accordingly, BARMM has shown significant and continuous recovery from the devastating impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Further, the Government of the Day organized a Covid-19 booster shot campaigns in support of the 'PinasLakas' Drive or the nationwide booster campaign of the Department of Health (DOH).

The Ministry of Health (MOH) expanded its medical efforts by providing hospital facilities, equipment as well as new vehicles ensuring the availability of services for the Bangsamoro people. They also hired additional medical staff to bolster their current healthcare warriors battling the Covid-19 pandemic and other purposes.

### Expanded public infrastructures

In terms of infrastructure development, the regional government considered the prime importance of various infra projects in recalibrating the region's connectivity and public services. In fact, in 2022, about hundreds [and still counting] of projects such as public markets, police stations,

legislative buildings, public terminals, and sanitary landfills were constructed and made available to the Local Government Units (LGUs) across the BARMM provinces.

In the third quarter, the Interior and Local Government Minister Atty. Naguib Sinarimbo led the various signing of Memoranda of Agreement (MOA) with Local Chief Executives (LCEs) for the construction of additional infra projects this coming 2023.

The MILG is currently implementing the construction of 250 barangay halls across the region, with another 100 halls next year. It aims to complete 600 village halls by 2025 which the regional government promised to the LGUs across the region.

MILG is also installing machines in the island provinces that will convert salty seawater into fresh drinkable water, addressing the scarcity of potable water in the area that has been going on for generations since the challenges being faced by the residents who need to travel by boat from one island to another for 4-5 hours to access to safe drinking water.

In the same way, to ensure the unhampered transport of goods and services in the upland areas, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Agrarian Reform (MAFAR), along with the Ministry of Public Works (MPW), built Farm-to-Market roads, rehabilitated and upgraded bridges and flood control structures all over the region to help farmers with the transportation of their products to public markets.

In terms of educational infra, the Education Ministry constructed more modern school classrooms and upgraded facilities and provided needed equipment in different school divisions throughout the region.

### Provided decent housing units

The Kapayapaan sa Pamayanan (KAPYANAN) program — one of the banner programs of the Office of the Chief Minister produced and distributed a total of 535 permanent housing units with two bedrooms, light and water components to families belonging to the poorest of the poor, former member of combatants and conflict-affected in the communities.

Before 2022 ended, the BARMM government turnover a total of 300 decent housing projects for the people of Cotabato City and led the groundbreaking ceremony for the construction of transitory shelters for Typhoon Paeng affected in Datu Blah Sinsuat (DBS) Municipality, in Maguindanao.

Also, the Ministry of Human Settlement and Development (MHSD) has been awarded a total of two hundred (200) housing units and currently constructing more than two thousand (2000) descent housing projects across the region which will soon be awarded to qualified and needy Bangsamoro people.

### Enhanced transportation network

In 2022, the Ministry of Transportation and Communications (MOTC), in partnership with the Philippine Airlines (PAL), launched direct flights from Cotabato to Tawi-Tawi and vice-versa to help increase access connectivity and boost tourist activity in the island provinces.

As the economic activities and daily life of many Bangsamoro depend on transportation, especially for small farmers and micro-entrepreneurs in transporting goods to markets and businesses, the MPW improved connectivity by building and upgrading strategic roads and bridges.

Also, MPW opened a number of road links across the region, including the Bualan-Balangas road worth Php18 million; Hawani-Latih road in Patikul Municipality worth Php30-million; Kasulitan road in Bus Bus, Jolo worth Php8-million; and Php10-million for Jolo Port Terminal Road.

Another three road network and two bridges were constructed in the Municipality of Bayang and Farm-to-Market Road (FMR) projects in the town of Lumbayanague; Bayabao-Raya Road (Mipantao Section) with a complete line canal; and the two-concreting Raya to Malungun Road in the province of Lanao del Sur.

The said projects expanded to promote the balanced development of industries in rural areas and the creation of more jobs and income opportunities all over the region.

### Sustained low poverty incidence

Despite challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, poverty incidence among families in the BARMM decreased from 52.6 percent in 2018 to 29.8 percent in 2021 according to Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA).

Lanao del Sur province recorded 10.9% from 71.2%; Maguindanao at 38.0% from 48.5%; Basilan at 53.5% from 73.5%; Sulu at 62.5% at 82.5%; Tawi-Tawi at 22.2% from 36.5%; and Cotabato City at 39.7% from 42.0%.

Meanwhile, Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) Secretary Atty. Benjamin Abalos, Jr. commended the performance of Bangsamoro leadership during the recent local governance orientation of BARMM Local Chief Executives.

"The poverty rate level is going down in the BARMM, the agricultural sector is going up, and the Gross Regional Domestic Product (GRDP) is second only to the CALABARZON," he stressed.

### Plummeting inflation rate

The PSA announced on Dec. 9 that BARMM recorded the lowest inflation rate among all regions in the country at 6.0 percent for the month of November 2022.

In October, the Bangsamoro region, along with Region XII, also recorded the lowest inflation rate among all regions in the country at 6.5 percent. In November, Sulu province recorded the lowest inflation rate at 3.6%, followed by Maguindanao at 4.4%, Tawi-Tawi at 5.5%, Basilan at 6.6%, and Lanao del Sur at the highest at 10.0%.

### Boosting local agri and fishery production

Along with various ministries, the Bangsamoro Government fully supported all farmers and fishermen by providing agricultural and fishing equipment such as rice processing, farm machinery, fishing boats, Ice Plants with cooler storage, solar dryer, and seaweed seedlings among others as they contribute their share to ensure the availability of agricultural products.

BARMM's agriculture and fishery sector remain pliant and resilient as one of the region's largest industries; the region manages and continues to provide the much-needed food supplies in Bangsamoro.

The total volume of fisheries production in the country for the second quarter of 2022 has reached 1,213.31 metric tons (MT). Of the total volume, BARMM has total fisheries production of 346.42 MT or 26%, making it the biggest contributor to fisheries production in the country.

In 2022, MAFAR reported that the region's production yields recorded a significant 36.46% increase in Palay production for the first quarter of 2020.

As for corn production, BARMM increased by 11.24% in the first quarter of 2021, that is, from 328,161.74 metric tons (MT) in 2020 to 365,042.98 MT in 2021.

MAFAR distributes and supplies farm inputs such as bags of assorted hybrid corn seeds, bottles of herbicides, bottles of pesticides, bags of certified palay seeds, and bottles of foliar fertilizers to the farmers in the region.

### More investments and entrepreneurs

In terms of investments, according to the Regional Bangsamoro Board of Investments (BBOI), the Bangsamoro region has generated a total of Php8.1 billion worth of investments in its first three years.

Regional BBOI reports that for three years since the creation of BARMM, local investors are boosting the economy with the said amount of investments in the region. Of which, Php4.1 billion worth of investment was logged in 2019, Php114 million in 2020, Php2.8 billion in 2021, and Php1.2 billion for 2022, which generated thousands of workers. Bangsamoro region's largest industry investor is in the banana industry and agriculture with 65.13% or Php4.5 billion worth of investments.

In 2022, a total of Php1.3 billion worth of investments have been generated by the Regional BBOI and generated around 1,052 employees in the region.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Trade, Investment and Tourism (MTIT) provided employment facilitation and training programs that will link workers to employment opportunities and enhance the competitiveness of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

Bangsamoro Government pushed for more entrepreneurship opportunities and conducted various investment forums and business matching and Networking Investment for Local Executives (NILE) projects and Investments Priorities Plan (IPP) in different provinces.

### Moro leaders unite in new composition of BTA under President Marcos

The previous year marked a historic event as the members and key figures of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) merged for peace and solidarity in the Bangsamoro region along with the coming of the new administration of President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. by agreeing to be part of the Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA).

The extended Bangsamoro Parliament consists of MILF and MNLF affiliates, peace advocates, representatives from Indigenous People lawyers, lawyer-certified public accountants, engineers, architects, medical doctors, media practitioners, and former and current government high-level officials.

Presidential Adviser on Peace, Reconciliation, and Unity (OPAPRU) Secretary Carlito Galvez Jr. lauded the President for making the Bangsamoro a top priority of his administration.

"The joining of the MNLF of Chair Nur Misuari with the MILF-led BTA is auspicious and heralds a significant step towards unity

in the BARMM," Galvez pointed out.

### Bolstered security, peace and order

As part of the Ministry of Peace and Order Safety's (MPOS) mandate which is to institutionalize peace-building, reconciliation, and unification, the Bangsamoro Government along with the National Government and Law Enforcement Agencies created various programs to sustain peace and order in the region.

The security condition in BARMM has significantly improved according to OPAPRU Secretary Galvez, Jr. during the recent 3rd Bangsamoro Public Order and Security Conference.

"The security condition in Bangsamoro has significantly improved, we have witnessed the efforts being carried off by the Bangsamoro government in strengthening peace and security efforts in the area. We are confident that these initiatives will continue the momentum in the coming months and years including the BARMM regional election in 2025," Galvez said via teleconference.

Based on the annual accomplishment by the ministry, 17 grassroots peace builders were recognized and awarded for being Peace Champions this year while a total of 720 peace advocates have been trained on early warning and early response training.

In 2022, the Bangsamoro Government also entered into a memorandum of agreement with the National Police Commission (NAPOLCOM) for the conduct of the latter's Special Qualifying Eligibility Examination (NSQEE).

Qualified members of the MILF and MNLF can join the Philippine National Police (PNP) if they meet the requirements set by the National Police Commission. Meanwhile, various former members of the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) returnees and former combatants individually received financial and livelihood assistance from the MPOS.

BARMM government, thru the MILG, recently handed over a total of eleven (11) patrol cars to the Philippine National Police (PNP) Police Regional Office-Bangsamoro Region (PRO-BAR) to strengthen the duties and responsibilities of men and women in uniform in sustaining peace and security in the region.

### Strengthening recovery and rehabilitation efforts amid disasters

The Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (MENRE), through its Forest Management Services, planted around 11.5 million tree seedlings in 10,401 hectares of land across the region. It also provided income to individuals from upland communities and people's organizations.

Apart from reforestation as one of the environmental measures to minimize the impact of natural disasters and mitigate climate change, the ministry also implemented and conducted a series of Information Education and Communication Campaigns through its provincial and municipal level field offices.

Likewise, the BARMM's Rapid Emergency Action on Disaster Incidents (READi) unit has trained hundreds of workers and volunteers in Water Search and Rescue (WASAR) program.

Further, 16 BARMM-LGUs were recognized for their excellent and outstanding efforts on local Disaster Risk Reduction and

Management (DRRM) this month on 22nd Gawad KALASAG (Kalamidad at Sakuna Labanan, Sariling Galing ang Kaligtasan) Seals Awards led by The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) and Office of Civil Defense (OCD-BARMM).

Following the devastation of Tropical Storm Paeng, the Bangsamoro Government implemented two-phased interventions worth Php2.9 billion for the early recovery and rehabilitation of people and places affected.

Residents who were displaced due to TS Paeng were continuously receiving relief assistance and supplies from the Bangsamoro Government. The early warning systems were also improved to ensure accurate and timely delivery of disaster information and warnings down to the local levels.

### Approval of the 2023 budget

The BTA Parliament approved P85.3 billion budget for 2023 from P79.8 billion for 2022 on Dec. 20, with 44 affirmative votes, zero negative votes, and zero abstentions.

BARMM budget has increased by around 6.89% increment with big chunks of the budget allocated to education, health, infrastructure, and social services.

On the same day, BTA approved the proposed extension of the availability of the Special Development Fund (SDF) and General Appropriation Act of Bangsamoro (GAAB) filed by the Government on the Day.

"We need to constantly remind ourselves that every peso we spent here in the BARMM is borne out of the blood, sweat, and tears of the people and communities that went through so much pain and suffering for the sake of the struggle. It is important that we keep our hearts pure and intentions sincere whenever we make use of our budget...and that is one essence of moral governance," Chief Minister Ahod Ebrahim said.

### BTA filed priority codes

In 2022, the Parliament has also submitted 16 priority legislations, two of which are the priority codes namely the Bangsamoro Local Governance Code (BLGC) and the Bangsamoro Electoral Code (BEC). Recently, the BTA also proposed bills creating eight (8) municipalities in the Special Geographic Area or SGA from Cotabato Province which became an addition to the official territory of the BARMM after a successful plebiscite in 2019.

"We hope that these will set the tone for the new BTA. So all things considered, I think it is safe to say that we were able to sustain the positive momentum we had in 2022 in terms of milestones and overall direction," Ebrahim said. **(Johaira Sahidala/BIO)**



## 22-member IGRB under Marcos admin meet for the first time

COTABATO CITY —The twenty two-member Intergovernmental Relations Body (IGRB) under President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr.’s administration met for the first time on Dec. 1 in Davao City to strengthen the relationship and policies between the national government and the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM).

Top officials from the national government were headed by Budget and Management Secretary Amenah Pangandaman, while BARMM officials were headed by Member of the Parliament and Education Minister Mohagher Iqbal — both are co-chairs of the IGRB.

Being an institutional mechanism created under the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL), IGRB enhances the cooperation, increases coordination, and greater convergence between BARMM and the National government, and serves as an integral part of the implementation of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro signed between the Government of the Philippines

(GPH) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

On the said meeting, Special Assistant to the President Sec. Antonio Ernesto F. Lagdameo, Jr. affirmed full support of the Marcos administration

“The President is giving full support and his instructions, in particular, to make sure yung mga kailangan para pagalawin lahat, whatever is needed by BARMM, we tried to give it altogether,” Lagdameo said.

“Rest assured, we are backing up everyone here. We are here to assist and we are here to help,” he added.

In retrospect, the President has been very vocal in supporting the gains of the peace process in the region. During the inaugural session of the Bangsamoro Parliament in August this year where he personally attended, he signified his full support.

“As your President, I assure you, the BTA and all the Bangsamoro people, of this administration’s full and unwavering commitment to the peace process and to the BARMM,” the head of the state said four months ago.

As he responded to “how is the IGRB helpful in nation building” during the press briefing broadcasted on the official Facebook account of the Office of the Presidential



Photo courtesy of OPAPRU

Adviser on Peace, Reconciliation, and Unity (OPAPRU), Interior and Local Government Secretary Atty. Benjamin Abalos Jr. said that IGRB could be a key.

“Ito ang susi, hindi lang ito iunlad ng BARMM-autonomiya [ng BARMM] kung di [pati na rin] ang buong bansa, lahat tayo. It will [harmonize]... the diversity, harmony, and unity of the Filipino nation,” Abalos said.

The IGRB members are, for the government: Special Assistant to the President Sec. Antonio Ernesto F. Lagdameo, Jr., Finance Sec. Benjamin F. Diokno, Interior and Local Government Sec. Benhur C. Abalos, Jr., Defense Sec. Jose C. Faustino, Jr., Public Works and Highways Sec. Manuel M. Bonoan, Energy Sec. Raphael P.M. Lotilla, Agriculture Senior Usec Domingo F. Panganiban, Transportation Sec. Jaime

J. Bautista, Economic and Development Authority Sec. Arsenio M. Balisacan, and OPAPRU Sec. Carlito G. Galvez, Jr.

For the BARMM, the members are: Speaker of the Bangsamoro Parliament MP Ali Pangalian M. Balindong, Senior Minister MP Abdulraof A. Macacua, Cabinet Secretary Mohd Asnin K. Pendatun, Finance, Budget and Management Minister Ubaida C. Pacasem, Interior and Local Government Minister Naguib G. Sinarimbo, Social Services Minister Raissa H. Jajurie, Public Works Minister Eduard U. Guerra, Agriculture, Fisheries, and Agrarian Reform Minister Mohammad S. Yacob, Environment, Natural Resources and Energy Minister Akmad A. Brahim, and Transportation and Communications Minister Paisalin C. Tago. **(Abdullah Matucan/BIO, with reports from OPAPRU)**

## BARMM highlights flagship projects during BIMP-EAGA meeting in Indonesia

COTABATO CITY—Delegates from the BARMM showcased the regional government’s flagship programs and projects during the 25th Brunei-Darussalam-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines East ASEAN Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA) Ministerial Meeting on Nov. 26 at Pontianak City, Indonesia.

Representing the leadership of BARMM Chief Minister Ahod Balawag Ebrahim, the delegation was joined by Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Agrarian Reform (MAFAR) Mohammad Yacob, Minister of Environment, Natural, Resource and Energy (MENRE) Akmad Brahim and, Minister of Trade, Investment and Tourism (MTIT) Abu Amri Taddik.

To realize the BIMP-EAGA Vision 2025, said event sought to shift economic activities from resource extraction to higher levels of processing and value-added production and growth in trade, investment and tourism, as well as promoting environmental and socio-cultural education.

Among the discussed registered projects include Barter Trade, Marawi Sustainable City, Turtle Islands Wildlife Sanctuary Eco-Tourism promotion and co-management, and renewable energy investment.

Moreover, Chief Minister’s flagship projects such as Integrated Bangsamoro Greening Program on combating climate change, energy connectivity, adaptation to rapid technological disruption, food security and economic recovery from the impact of Covid-19 pandemic were also discussed in sub-regional meetings.

Joining the BARMM delegation also included MENRE Bangsamoro Director-General Atty. Badr Salendab, Forest Management Services Director Abdul-Jalil Umngan, and MTIT Director Hussien Biruar. **(Johaira Sahidala)**



Photo courtesy of MENRE FMS

## IFPB OKs resolution to implement taxable elements in BARMM

COTABATO CITY—The Intergovernmental Fiscal Policy Board (IFPB) has approved a resolution on BARMM’s taxable elements such as capital gains tax, documentary stamp tax, and estate tax on Dec. 1, during its 4th meeting held in Davao City.

The approved resolution is according to Section 9, Article XII of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) which sets the implementation of sharing of revenues from the collection of taxes, where the taxable elements are both situated within and outside of the Bangsamoro territorial jurisdiction.

Minister of Finance, and Budget and Management (MFBM) Atty. Ubaida Pacasem thanked the IFPB members for their continuous support and swift approval of the resolution.

“We have always been grateful to the National Government for its steady support to the Bangsamoro Government in establishing its foundation. Thus, the IFPB-Bangsamoro Government is with you in achieving your 10-point agenda for economic renewal and long-term growth, most especially fiscal discipline, and transparent and efficient governance,” Pacasem said.

“The economic growth we have seen in BARMM since the passage of the Bangsamoro Organic Law and the continuous economic achievements have

made us all hope for a better Bangsamoro in the near future,” he added.

Department of Finance (DOF) Secretary Benjamin Diokno, who also chairs the IFPB, expressed his optimism about the success of the Bangsamoro Government’s undertakings for the next fiscal year.

Other BARMM officials present at the meeting were Minister of Trade, Investments and Tourism (MTIT) Abu Amri Taddik, Bangsamoro Planning and Development Authority (BPDA) Deputy Director-General Amil Abubakar, and Bangsamoro Finance Director Sittie Amirah Pendatun.

Other agenda discussed during the meeting include BARMM’s annual block grant computation, tax study group deliverables, and the participation of the Bangsamoro Government in Al-Amanah Islamic Investment Bank of the Philippines (AIIIBP).

The IFPB is composed of the officials of the National Government and the Bangsamoro Government. The members from the National Government include DOF Secretary Diokno, Department of Budget and Management (DBM) Secretary Amenah Pangandaman, and National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) Undersecretary Carlos Bernardo Abad Santos. **(Kasan Usop, Jr.)**



Photo courtesy of MFBM



## National, Bangsamoro lawmakers join forces to bolster peace, development in BARMM

COTABATO CITY—The national and Bangsamoro lawmakers joined forces, following the conduct of the first Organization Meeting for the Philippine Congress-Bangsamoro Parliament Forum (PCBPF) held on Nov. 15 in Pasay City, to discuss ways of bolstering development and sustaining the gains of peace in the Bangsamoro region.

The meeting, led by Inter-Governmental Relations Body (IGRB) co-chairs, Department of Budget and Management (DBM) Secretary Amenah Pangandaman and BARMM Minister Mohagher Iqbal, aimed to constitute the forum and discuss legislation that concerns BARMM.

DBM Secretary Pangandaman shared that “the establishment of BARMM is a historic win for the whole country, and achieving lasting peace and sustained socio-economic development in the region is a common aspiration for the Filipino people.”

Senate President Juan Miguel Zubiri and House Speaker Ferdinand Martin Romualdez



Photo courtesy of CMCT

led the forum discussions which served as an avenue to update on the status of the priority codes, including the Bangsamoro Electoral Code, Bangsamoro Local Government Code, Bangsamoro Revenue Code, and the Bangsamoro Law for Indigenous Peoples (IP), among other important legislative agenda.

Bangsamoro Parliament Member Atty. Sha Elijah Dumama-Alba emphasized that the PCBPF is one of the IGR mechanisms to meet and discuss the legislative initiatives that will affect the Bangsamoro region that was created for purposes of cooperation and coordination between the two (2) legislative bodies, as required under Section 3, Art. 16 of Republic Act (RA) 11054 otherwise known as the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL).

“The meat of discussions yesterday was solely for the interest and well-being of the general public [especially in the Bangsamoro region],” MP Alba, who is also the Bangsamoro Transition Authority’s (BTA) Floor Leader, said.

Alba further stressed that the PCBPF agrees to create several TWGs to study the matters raised, facilitate discussions and come up with recommendations to the Forum. The PCBPF is scheduled to meet every two (2) months.

Meanwhile, Senator Zubiri, who is a fervent advocate of peace in Mindanao and the principal author of the BOL, thanked in a Facebook post the House of Representatives

and the BARMM Government for participating in the forum.

“Maraming salamat po kina Speaker Martin Romualdez, Speaker Pangalian Balindong, at lahat ng mga kasama nating mambabatas mula sa Senado, Kamara, at Bangsamoro Parliament! At salamat din kina Chief Minister Ahod Ebrahim, Sec. Amenah Pangandaman, Sec. Carlito Galvez, at Minister Mohagher Iqbal na nakasama rin natin sa forum,” Zubiri wrote.

“Tuloy-tuloy po ang ating pagtutulungan, para sa tuloy-tuloy na pag-asenso ng BARMM,” he added. **(Kasan Usop, Jr.)**

## BARMM strengthens coordination with recruitment agencies to better protect migrant workers

COTABATO CITY—To better protect the Bangsamoro migrant workers from illegal recruitment activities and human trafficking, the Ministry of Labor and Employment (MOLE) gathered the different recruitment agencies operating in BARMM to strengthen and monitor their compliance for operations on Nov. 17, in this city.

This was through the conduct of the first Bangsamoro Annual Recruitment Agency Summit (BARAS)—one of the programs of MOLE’s Recruitment and Accreditation Division where all recruitment agencies and similar entities or alike such as Security Agencies operate within the BARMM areas.

During the summit, the agencies presented their annual reports, recruitment process, and accomplishments along with the invited local Overseas Filipino Worker (OFW) organization, International Labor Organization (ILO), International Organization for Migration (IOM), and other concerned agencies/entities.

Accordingly, the event was organized under the guiding principle and

provisions of Bangsamoro Autonomy Act Number 9.

This is an act regulating the operations of local and foreign recruitment agencies within the BARMM, which serves as a tool for the MOLE to be more effective in monitoring both local and foreign agencies’ compliance in the region.

MOLE Minister Muslimin Sema said that the ministry has been striving hard to implement laws, rules, and regulations to protect the rights of migrant workers and to ensure fair treatment during the recruitment process.

“This summit provides a platform to converge and to forge collaborative effort for enhanced coordination and policy coherence that could also open an opportunity access to database aimed to monitor and regulate legal recruitment activities held in the BARMM,” Sema said.

“The Department of Migrant Workers recently announced the opening of new job opportunities for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and this opportunity. If well utilized, it will benefit not only those who are engaged in



Photo by Comenie Ali

the business of employment and recruitment but also our fellow Bangsamoros who aspire for a better job to alleviate the living conditions of their families,” Sema added.

According to National Project Coordinator Marie Allyssa Dacasin of the ILO, in 2019, about 4.29 million reached the combined total number of 2.18 million OFWs and 2.11 million Overseas Contract Workers (OCWs).

Meanwhile, in 2020, it lowered to 3.48 million due to the restriction effect of the Covid-19 pandemic in labor deployment abroad. In BARMM, about 51,500 overseas workers were recorded in 2019 and 39,190 in 2020.

IOM Project Assistant Jhala Grace Salas mentioned that from Jan. 1 to Nov. 15, 2022, a total of 202 cases of human trafficking has been recorded in the provinces of Maguindanao, Sulu, and Basilan, and 95 cases in the

province of Tawi-Tawi.

“As our ways forward, I do hope that all of the recruitment agencies operating in the Bangsamoro region will be registered and given due accreditation in the MOLE to prevent the act of illegal recruitment and to avoid the cases of human trafficking of our constituents,” said Dr. Yahiya Sabal, chief of the Recruitment and Accreditation Division.

The summit was attended and participated by representatives from MML Recruitment Service, Inc.; Eastern Overseas Employment Center, Inc.; EIM Manpower Service, Inc.; Insana International Placement Agency; International Multi-Services; Everpoint Security Agency; Athenna International Manpower Service, Inc.; Mindanao Skills Language and Training Center, Inc.; and Kaagapay Overseas Filipino Workers Research and Services, Inc. **(Kasan Usop, Jr.)**

## BTA holds public consultation on electoral code in Tawi-Tawi

TAWI-TAWI—Being one of the priority legislations needed to pass into law in the region, the Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA) held its public consultation for the Bangsamoro Electoral Code (BEC) on Dec. 5, at Mindanao State University (MSU) Gymnasium, Sanga-Sanga, Bongao in this province.

Local chief executives, including the governor, board members, mayors, down to the Association of Barangay Chairman (ABC) President, and other government stakeholders such as men in uniform from across the province of Tawi-Tawi, took part in the public consultation.

BTA's Committee of Rules facilitated the consultation, which aims to hear the voices of all the public sectors in the region and to ensure that their narratives will be reflected in the electoral legislation.

Tawi-Tawi Governor Yshmael Sali expressed his full support for the bill and thanked the BTA for listening to their voices and for involving them in the legislative process of enacting the proposed code.

"As the father of Tawi-Tawi, we are very happy and thankful for the members of the parliament in explaining to us the provisions and purpose of the electoral code," Governor Sali said.

"If we have opinions, recommendations and suggestions, at least, we were allowed to raise it directly to the MPs and in support, we will submit our position paper for the bill," Sali added.

The primary considerations in the BEC consultation are the essence of genuine autonomy, innovation, enhancement, localization, the nature of parliamentary form of government, incorporating provisions on party governance, and ensuring a clean, fair, and honest election.

Mayor of Mapun, Suraida Muksin, also expressed her appreciation to BARMM and for the effort of the Members of Parliament (MPs) in initiating the public consultation in the province.

"Our questions, doubts, and sentiments are heard, addressed by some of our MPs, and becoming clear to us," Muksin said.

"This has a good impact in Tawi-Tawi because [definitely] elections in 2025 will surely take place in our region, and we are now ready ahead because we learned already the provisions of the code out of this consultation," Muksin added.

Meanwhile, Simunul Mayor Wasila Abdulrahman said, "we have raised some issues during the consultation and hopefully,



Photo by Hamdan Badrudin

our voices from Simunul, being part of Tawi-Tawi and Bangsamoro region, will be heard and ensured to have given attention by the regional government,"

Atty. Raissa Jajurie, BTA deputy floor leader and presiding officer of the consultation, explained that all of the collected inputs, opinions, suggestions, and recommendations from the stakeholders shall be discussed in the committee.

"We are very happy to have a successful conduct of public consultation on Bill No. 29, also known as the Bangsamoro Electoral Code [...] our Parliament wants to create a law that will pass even in the first quarter of the year 2023 that reflects the unique

features of BARMM," Jajurie said.

The main salient feature of the electoral code stated the establishment of the Bangsamoro Electoral Office (BEO) by the Commission on Election (COMELEC) which shall be the central body of the BARMM in the supervision of all elections therein, with delegated powers from the COMELEC en banc to ensure compliance of laws, and other pertinent rules of the COMELEC taking cognizance of the essence of parliamentarism as a tool of good governance and development.

Public consultations are also being held simultaneously in the island provinces of Sulu and Basilan for the said priority code. **(Kasan Usop, Jr.)**

## Agricultural, biosystems engineers to strengthen farm-to-market road development in BARMM

COTABATO CITY—Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Agrarian Reform (MAFAR), together with the Philippine Society of Agricultural Biosystems and Engineering (PSABE), is strengthening the development of farm-to-market roads in BARMM.

This came after PSABE conducted its first regional summit on farm-to-market road Master Planning and Agricultural Biosystems and Engineering (ABE) Services in this city on Nov. 8-11, graced by Agriculture Minister Mohammad Jacob.

PSABE is an accredited integrated engineering professional organization for agricultural and biosystems engineers in the country.

The summit carried the theme 'Uplifting Agriculture and Biosystems Engineering Profession in the Bangsamoro Region' which aimed to provide the local agricultural and biosystem engineers with comprehensive up-to-date information and develop a shared understanding of the agricultural and biosystem engineering profession in the Bangsamoro region.

Yacob stressed that ABE is crucial in BARMM in the implementation of several agricultural legislation in the country such as the Philippine Agricultural and Biosystems Engineers Competitiveness Road Map, Republic Act (RA) No. 10601 or the Agricultural and Fisheries Mechanization Law), the RA No. 8559 or the Philippine Agricultural Engineering Act of 1998), and



Photo courtesy of MAFAR

the RA No. 10915 or An Act Strengthening, Modernizing and Aligning the Practice of Agricultural Engineering in the Country into the Internationally Recognized Practice of Agricultural and Biosystems Engineering, and for other Purposes.

Yacob further stated, "the strong partnership of PSABE-BARMM with the academe, public,

and private sectors is highly imperative to carry this humungous yet noble task."

PSABE has a special focus on understanding and application of engineering, science, and designs to create solutions for problems concerning land development, irrigation, and drainage including dams, farm roads, and bridges. **(Kasan Usop, Jr.)**

## BARMM distributes 20,000 sacks of rice seeds for farmers in Paeng-hit areas

COTABATO CITY—Bangsamoro Government, through the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Agrarian Reform (MAFAR), distributed sacks of rice seeds to farmers affected by Tropical Storm Paeng in the region.

MAFAR-Maguindanao Chief Agriculturist Engr. Saudi Mangindra said that the initial intervention made by the MAFAR provincial office was the distribution of 20,000 sacks of rice seeds to the affected farmers.

"Almost 40 percent of the 20,000 sacks of rice seeds under the Rice Competitiveness



Photo courtesy of MAFAR

Enhancement Fund (RCEF) Program have already been distributed immediately to our farmers hit by the storm, and another regular program of MAFAR with 50,000 sacks of rice will also be intended to our farmers to help their recovery from the onslaught of TS Paeng," Mangindra said.

BARMM's agriculture and fishery sector lost an estimated Php586,096,553.00 from Tropical Storm Paeng, affecting 14,174 farmers, fisherfolk, and agrarian reform beneficiaries (ARBs) in Maguindanao,

Cotabato City, and Special Geographic Areas (SGA) in BARMM.

Moreover, TS Paeng ravaged 24 municipalities composed of 209 barangays with an estimated value damaged and loss of Php560,211,553.00. Five (5) barangays in Cotabato City loss Php2,220,000.00, while SGA's 22 barangays loss of an estimated cost of Php27,115,000.00 in agriculture, livestock, and fisheries.

According to MAFAR-Maguindanao Provincial Director Ronjamin Maulana, those greatly affected commodities which include rice, corn, high-value crops, livestock, and fisheries are expected to increase after assessing and evaluating the actual damage and losses brought by the unprecedented tropical storm.

"So far, the recent TS Paeng is unique and considered to be the first typhoon that hardly hit us in the history of Maguindanao with so many losses and damages to our agriculture,

fisheries, and livestock commodities," Maulana said.

"As a result, about 6,444 hectares of rice, 4,367 hectares of corn, 183 hectares of assorted vegetables, 527 hectares of fishponds, and 770 assorted livestock are affected," Maulana added.

Meanwhile, Assistant to the Provincial Director for Cotabato City and SGA Disumimba Rasheed said that they are awaiting for the completion of assessment process and priority identification for the affected farmers.

"As soon as our field staff complete the assessment process and identify the priority needs of our farmers in the area, we will support them immediately with agricultural inputs like seeds, fertilizers, livestock, and other commodities," he said. **(Kasan Usop, Jr.)**



Photo by Hamdan Badrudin

## Hundreds of stakeholders join first-ever BARMM Education Summit

DAVAO CITY — Flocks of education stakeholders from the academe, local government officials, development partners, and international agencies, among others, joined the first-ever education summit of the Bangsamoro Government on Dec. 5 – 6, at the SMX Convention Center, SM Lanang.

Led by the Ministry of Basic, Higher, and Technical Education (MBHTE), the summit serves as a focused, intensive, and inclusive venue for consultations on continuing education and ground-up organizing for the education sector in the region.

The summit is the culmination of an earlier series of pre-education summits conducted in the provinces of Maguindanao del Sur and del Norte, Lanao del Sur, Basilan,

Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, and the Special Geographic Area.

Head of the Government of the Day Chief Minister Ahod Ebrahim, in a recorded message, expressed his desire for the education summit as a fundamental avenue for nation-building.

“The Education Summit is an opportunity to replicate the message of how significant education and literacy are in nation-building. It is also a venue to strengthen and empower local school boards, school governing councils, and parent-teacher associations,” said Ebrahim.

The Chief Minister stressed that he envisioned “an inclusive education for all learners and educators”.

“We do not choose whom to teach and who will teach. We aspire for a Bangsamoro Region where no learner is left behind and no educator feels unappreciated, underserved, or unheard,” he added.

Meanwhile, in his State of the Education Address, MBHTE Minister Mohagher Iqbal also emphasized that “education is a pillar of nation-building”.

“It can help society sustainably and logically sustain and overcome significant impediments – poverty, injustice, corruption, and conflict,” said Iqbal.

During the activity, Iqbal also read the message of Vice President and Education Secretary Sara Duterte

which stressed the role of education in post-conflict reconstruction and in sustaining the gains of peace.

“We counteract violent extremism by nurturing among our children and youth the values of inclusion, tolerance, conflict resolution, and non-violence,” Duterte said.

“Let us work together to reshape the future of BARMM by strengthening our education system, filling the learning gaps caused by the pandemic and instituting a culture of peace curriculum to ensure a successful post-conflict reconstruction,” the Vice President added. **(Abdullah Matucan/BIO)**

## 50 indigent families to benefit from BARMM’s housing resettlement project

MAGUINDANAO DEL NORTE—Fifty (50) indigent families in the region will benefit from 50 decent housing units under the Resettlement Project of the Ministry of Human Settlements and Development (MHSD)—the housing arm of the Bangsamoro Government.

To be constructed in Barangay Darapanan, Sultan Kudarat, Maguindanao del Norte, Chief of Planning and Design Division Engr. Zainodin Buisan unveiled the housing design during the groundbreaking on November 12, 2022.

“Each unit will be a one-storey residential building with a 49 sq.m. floor area, two bedrooms, one bathroom, a kitchen, and a living room area,” Buisan shared.

As he welcomed the participants



Photo Courtesy of MHSD

to the central administrative camp of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), Director General Esmal Ebrahim disclosed that beneficiaries will be selected based on identified guidelines.

“The selection of beneficiaries will be based on guidelines identified by

the Housing and Human Settlements Division in line with the community’s needs and inputs from local stakeholders, and to be announced on a later date,” Ebrahim explained.

While exemplifying Moral Governance in their service delivery, Director II for Operations and Management Salem

Demuna reminded everyone that “the services [of MHSD] are always to please Allah SWT first and foremost”.

Aside from the housing units in Darapanan, MHSD is also implementing the same projects in strategic locations across the region. **(Abdullah Matucan)**

# World Children’s Day: BARMM stands for Bangsamoro children’s rights, protection

COTABATO CITY—Bangsamoro Government reaffirms its commitment to protecting children from violence and ensuring their right to live in a peaceful world as stated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

Inside the Bangsamoro Government Center, on Nov. 20, the Office of the Chief Minister’s facade was lit in blue in line with the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) #GoBlueCampaign—a strong symbol of hope that stands for Bangsamoro people that “every child has a story to tell, regardless of their gender, race, status, and capabilities.”

This was in line with this year’s World Children’s Day theme—“Sigaw ng Kabataan: Walang Iwanan”.

“The protection of children’s rights is enshrined in our legal framework and policies. This is because every child has the right to a meaningful

childhood,” Minister of Social Services and Development (MSSD) Atty. Raissa Jajurie said.

MSSD distributed loot bags containing fruits and sweets, school supply kits, and fancy eyeglasses to the children who attended the event, while the Bangsamoro Youth Commission (BYC) gave them free candies and notebooks.

Meanwhile, UNICEF Philippines Representative Oyunsaikhan Dendevnorov said, “regardless of age, gender, race, religion, disability, sexual orientation or another status, every child deserves to be included and celebrated, as well as protected against all forms of discrimination. Children must have a say in decisions that affect them. Listening to their voices is crucial for inclusive development.”

In other parts of the world, WCD is being commemorated since the United Nations General Assembly



Photo courtesy of MSSD

adopted the Declaration of the Rights of the Child in 1959 and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in 1989.

In the Philippines, the “Bangon Batang Bangsamoro” anchored to the children’s month celebration in the country that encapsulates and amplifies the efforts of the Bangsamoro Government’s interventions to address the rights of the child in development, protection,

survival, and participation, with a special focus on children who bore the brunt of Typhoon Paeng.

The MSSD and other BARMM ministries are conducting outreach programs to orphans, internally displaced children, and other vulnerable children in the region. **(Myrna Tepadan)**

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To empower the Bangsamoro and foster civic participation by delivering relevant, timely, and accurate news and information through various multi-media platforms, research and public relations.



**Bangsamoro** Government

merdeka@bangsamoro.gov.ph

(064) 421 9427