

Message of Minister Mohagher Iqbal

Ministry of Basic, Higher, Technical Education

Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao

Banquet for Scholars and Intellectuals hosted by the
Embassy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the Philippines

21 May 2019, Ibrahim Convention Hall, EM Manor Hotel, Cotabato City

Asalaamu alaikum warakmatulahi taala wa barakatuh.

May Peace and Mercy and Blessings of Allah be Upon You.

His Excellency Ahod Balawag Ebrahim, the Honorable Interim Chief Minister;

Honorable Fares Bin Saad Al-Mutairi, Religious Attaché of the Embassy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the Philippines

<Please insert other VIPs>

Esteemed guests, ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon.

I want to express my gratitude to the Embassy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the Philippines for their kind invitation to this impressive gathering. Though I would not necessarily consider myself an intellectual, it is my honor to be in the company of learned and admirable people. I would also like to congratulate the winners of the Holy Qur'an and Sunnah competition. Your commitment is an inspiration to the younger generation of Muslims. Education, after all, does not only focus on obtaining technical knowledge. It is also about moral development and values formation, of which both the Holy Qur'an and Sunnah provide.

There is no doubt that the Philippines and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia have robust and productive bilateral relations. Modern political and economic ties between our countries can be traced centuries ago when Arab traders and Muslim missionaries first visited these shores. We should also emphasize that Saudi Arabia is also a friend of the peace process between the Philippine Government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, through its membership in the peace architecture (i.e., International Contact Group) and the observer status granted to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

After the successful conduct of plebiscite for the approval of the Bangsamoro Organic Law last January 2019, the peace process is now in the transition phase beginning with the establishment of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. In addition to my role as Chairman of the MILF Peace Implementing Panel, I also have the privilege of serving the BARMM as the Minister of Basic, Higher, and Technical Education. By improving the educational system in the Bangsamoro, we aim to produce (at least) one professional in every family in the BARMM.

Admittedly, the education sector in the Bangsamoro is facing resource gaps. While trade and economic investments are integral to the BARMM, we also hope that education could be one of the priority areas of cooperation between Saudi Arabia and the Bangsamoro regional government. We envision that the educational system in the Bangsamoro to embody a high, quality standard with a broad, relevant, and inclusive curriculum that would guarantee the employability of its graduates regardless of their chosen field.

Again, I would like to thank the Embassy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the Philippines for their kind invitation to today's special event. We also look forward to cooperating on issues of mutual importance.

Sukran and a pleasant afternoon to all.
