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MMA NEWS

MALAYSIAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

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FOR MEMBERS ONLY

Sabah Welcomes You

**MMA Convention &
Scientific Congress 2023
& 63rd MMA AGM**



The image is a composite. The top half shows a coastal scene with several traditional stilt houses built on wooden poles in the turquoise sea. A small boat with a person is visible near the houses. The sky is blue with scattered white clouds. The bottom half is a close-up of a sea slug, likely a nudibrach, with a yellowish body and numerous black spots. It has long, thin, orange-tipped appendages extending from its back. The background of the bottom half is a soft, out-of-focus green and blue.

Under the Sea

Sabah is known worldwide, at least by many underwater enthusiasts, as a coral haven that is yet to be fully explored. The visual “wow” factor gives one a sense of excitement that does not fade easily. For doctors who serve in Sabah, it would be the greatest loss of your lifetime if you miss out on scuba diving here, or at the very least go snorkelling at one of the many islands in Sabah.

The famous Pulau Sipadan, off the coast of Semporna, is ranked among the top 10 diving spots in the world with its still waters, amazing underwater wildlife, live corals and picturesque sights underwater. Once someone has immersed themselves in the beauty of the blue ocean, the tendency to be addicted to these magnificent sights is irresistible.

However, you are definitely mistaken if you think Pulau Sipadan is the only dive spot. There are many other dive spots all over Sabah, from Labuan, Kota Kinabalu, Kudat, and to the east, Sandakan, Lahad Datu and Tawau. Each diving spot boasts its own unique features and a variety of special marine animals. Trust me, the beauty of marine wildlife is something majestic and everyone who has been , or is in Sabah, should take the once in a lifetime opportunity to see and be bedazzled by them.



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Recreational divers from all over the world travel here to dive in these wonderful locations. For those who have thalassophobia (fear of large bodies of water, such as the ocean), you can try snorkelling around the beaches islands such as Pulau Mantanani, Pulau Sapi, Pulau Gaya, Pulau Mamutik and Pulau Manukan. However, we must also take care to keep the environment clean and free from rubbish, as this is necessary to maintain the bio-ecology of marine life.

MMA Sabah Branch in collaboration with HATWKK Scuba Club had successfully organised the very first Underwater Clean-Up and Fun Dive last December 2022 with an overwhelming response from divers around Malaysia.

In conjunction with this year's physical 63rd National MMA AGM & Scientific Congress in Sabah, the organising committee would sincerely like to invite all MMA members to visit and attend this event in Hilton Hotel Kota Kinabalu from 6 - 8 September 2023. We are looking forward to this year's AGM as most of us had missed the social interaction and networking that we used to have during the AGMs before the pandemic.

On top of that, we would organise diving and snorkelling activities if many members show interest. As this is the preliminary announcement, we hope at interested members book their flight tickets early to enjoy the benefits of a good rate. The organising committee will try to publish an article every month leading up to the AGM to promote our activities and happenings that we have planned for the AGM. **B MMA**



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Photos courtesy of Col (Dr) Shamsul Bahary bin Muhamad

The Mystic Mountain Akinabalu

‘Widowmaker’ or ‘Ancestors resting place’ – even the native folklore was at odds regarding the origin of the name Kinabalu. Mount Kinabalu was originally believed to house a gigantic dragon who jealously guarded a pearl. Local legend described the futile attempts of Chinese soldiers in ancient times, who in their effort to steal away the precious stone, met their untimely end, leaving their wives as widows i.e. “Cina balu”.

Another tradition reports that Kinabalu is a corrupted term of *Kinabahu*, which should be read as a three-syllable word ‘Ki-na-bahu’ loosely translated as “the revered place of the dead (ancestors)”.

The ubiquitous Mount Kinabalu is as enigmatic as its name; peaking at 4,000m high, the mountain is curiously tall as compared to its brethren within the same mountain range which only averaged around 1,000m with few peaks reaching 2,500m.

Coming from the west road, past the lush greeneries of pekan Nabal, visitors will be struck by the dramatic difference in height between the Mount Kinabalu and the Crocker Ranges surrounding it.

Akinabalu, i.e. the Solitary Father as locals call it, revels in its splendid isolation. Composed mainly of granite, it is unusually rocky; a feature that can only be appreciated as one gets closer to it. Even for the uninitiated, the massive granite dome that is Mount Kinabalu is unmistakable from distance.

Mount Kinabalu undoubtedly owed its formation to tectonic plate shifts, which according to geologists, occurred 6-8 millions years ago. This event is of such significance that much of the biodiversity found in the region dated *after* the geological phenomenon, whereby rocks deep within the crust of Crocker Ranges began to melt, forming granite which rose rapidly and crystallised onto the surface, becoming what is now known as Mount Kinabalu.

This led to the dramatic difference of altitude from the lowlands to the peak of the mountain. Because the temperature and environment change rapidly as you ascend, this means that niches for different species will change rapidly. As a consequence, Kinabalu is exceptionally rich and diverse with four different climatic zones, housing more than 4,500 species of flora and fauna.

As early as 1961 in one of the very first scientific exploration of the region, Professor John Corner of the Royal Society Expedition noted, "There is no other place in the world that supplies in so short a journey such a stupendous transect of plant-life."

In an area measuring just 30 x 40km, more than 5,500 plant species have been recorded since then. Compare that with the number of plants known from Europe (12,000) or Australia (24,000), which are 6,000–8,000 times larger in area.

Reaching the peak of Mount Kinabalu has long been considered as a rite of passage for visitors to Sabah and rightfully so. The idea of arriving to Sabah without reaching Mount Kinabalu almost feels like an unfinished work to many, akin to visiting a place without greeting the host. To climb Kinabalu is not that difficult – you can book yourself a climb from the Sabah Parks website.

The trip will take 2D/1N as climbers are required to stay within the Kinabalu Park HQ overnight. The hike itself only takes 5-7 hours on a well-trodden trail that is described as moderate. If the idea of climbing the highest mountain in Southeast Asia sounds too daunting, a casual visit to the Kinabalu Park Headquarter or to any of the nine walking trails is also a fulfilling experience. This writer has personally walked through half of them and found each trail vastly different from the other but equally beautiful.

If it is any consolation to those who haven't climbed Mount Kinabalu, this writer must confess that he has yet to reach the peak of the mountain and this writing is borne out of deep reading during one of his work trips. That work trip required him to be a part of medical standby coverage team accompanying a group of cyclists



covering the Sandakan-Kota Kinabalu route for a charity cause.

While driving past Mount Kinabalu, this writer remembers a British colonialist in the 1920s who presumably passed the same road who wrote, "Of its kind there is no more lovely sight in all the world, and, though distance is supposed to lend enchantment, it is not so with Kinabalu, for every day's march nearer to its peaks makes them appear more wonderful".

Mark your calendar so you won't miss the upcoming AGM from 6-8 Sept 2023 at Hilton KK!

You can plan your trip ahead and perhaps even take the challenge of scaling Mount Kinabalu on this trip. If that's not your cup of tea, you can still catch a glimpse of the breathtaking view of the mountain in the morning from where you will be staying during the AGM.

Rest assured that this writer has already marked his calendar. **BMMMA**



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Sabah The Best of Borneo



Situated on the beautiful island of Borneo, Sabah is the second largest state in Malaysia and shares the island of Borneo with Sarawak, Brunei, and Indonesian Kalimantan.

Sabah is richly blessed with nature diversity, unique cultures, fun adventure, beautiful beaches, and fantastic cuisines for the adventurous taste buds. We have it all, from the world's largest flower (the Rafflesia), one of the highest mountains in South East Asia (Mount Kinabalu), and even one of the world's top dive sites (Sipadan Island).

Sabah is also known for her great natural treasures which include the world-renowned Danum Valley Conservation Area and Tabin which is Sabah's largest wildlife reserve. Not only will you be amazed by the places to see and things to do here, you will also be treated with unique Sabahan hospitality.

Explore the unique culture and tradition of Sabah and get ready to experience sweet memories to last a lifetime!

Borneo is the third largest island in the world and is located at the centre of the Maritime Southeast



Asia. This island is divided between Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei.

Nevertheless, for people outside of Indonesia, "Kalimantan" refers to the area which is occupied by Indonesia on the island of Borneo. Malaysia's region of Borneo is called East Malaysia or Malaysian Borneo. The independent nation of Brunei occupies the

remainder of the island, being the wealthiest of the rest.

Once known as North Borneo, Sabah was under the British colony during the late 19th century till the early 20th century. Sabah gained self-government on 31 August 1963. Together with Malaya, Singapore, Sabah and Sarawak, the the Federation of Malaysia was formed on 16 September 1963.

There are more than 30 indigenous groups in Sabah with the largest non-indigenous ethnic group being the Chinese and the largest indigenous group being the Kadazan-Dusun people. Three other larger ethnic groups in Sabah are the Bajau, Murut and Rungus. Apart from the Sabahans' own diverse mother tongues, Bahasa Malaysia (national language) and English is widely spoken; Mandarin and some Chinese dialects are also widely spoken.



Pesta Kaamatan

It's that time of year once more. Young girls are shuffling here and there with their hair tied up in a fancy bun; loud gongs can be heard from a far and everyone is rocking the Sumazau. For native Sabahans, this is a normal occurrence for the month of May.



the word 'Runduk Tadau' meaning 'the girl crowned by sunlight.' This beauty pageant is a tribute to Huminodun, who was sacrificed by her father so the people could have a plentiful harvest.

But if you're not from around here, it marks the start of joyous festival that goes on for a month.

Harvest Festival, or commonly known as Tadau Kaamatan, is a sacred tradition to honour the bond between the Creator and Creation. According to legend, this is to give thanks to their god, Kinoingan, for sacrificing his daughter, Huminodun, by cutting her to pieces and spreading it across the field which then produced a fruitful harvest of the paddy. The word 'Kaamatan' means "harvest" in Kadazandusun.

If this is your first time in Sabah, Tadau Kaamatan is a celebration you just can't miss. It is a festival loaded with cultural events. This is where men and women of all ages engage in a game of Mipulos (knuckle wrestling) and Migayat Lukug (tug of war) or compete with others in Sugandoi (a singing competition). You might also want to take the opportunity during the festival to feast on sumptuous grub and rare delicacies.

Out of all, what everyone is anticipating most is the Unduk Ngadau beauty pageant. Unduk Ngadau derives from

Unduk Ngadau goes beyond than just a pretty face; it represents Huminodun and the sacrifices she made for the Kadazan-Dusun community.

The grand finale for Tadau Kaamatan is on 30-31 May, but there are other events on different dates, so everyone should grab the chance to check it out. Take a trip to Hongkod Koisaan KDCA as there will be long line of stalls selling all kinds of food from pork burger to Butod. Make sure you're schedule is free for the grand finale!

Lastly, mark your calendar so you won't miss the upcoming AGM from 6-8 Sept 2023 at Hilton KK! **BMMA**



Dr Brandon Patrick Senagang
Chairman MMA Sabah



Famous Islands of Sabah

A haven for divers and snorkellers, Sabah is blessed with picturesque islands of varying sizes, each with its own attractions. Some are vestiges of extinct volcanoes, others are just a sandbar surrounded by cerulean waters. Rich in marine life, these islands are in the Coral Triangle, a tropical region boasting the right conditions to stimulate the proliferation of reef-building corals.

Sabah has near 400 islands of the greater north-eastern half of Borneo, and only a handful of which have been developed for tourism. The popular Sipadan and Tunku Abdul Rahman Park represents the tip of the iceberg, with more awaiting discovery. The only known blue hole in Malaysia was ascertained in 2019 in Darvel Bay by a group of marine researchers. It reinforces the belief that Sabah has a lot more to offer even though it is already an awesome tourist destination right now.

Bohey Dulang Island



Located in Semporna, Sabah, it is the second largest island in the Tun Sakaran Marine Park archipelago. With a unique lagoon-like formation created by the flooding of seawater to a crater from the remnants of an ancient volcano, the sea around Bohey Dulang Island is inhabited by lots of colourful coral reefs, providing divers and snorkellers with a picturesque view.

Besides diving and snorkelling, visitors can also hike up to the highest peak (353 metres) to enjoy a scenic view of the surrounding area, and get close to the rare flora and fauna found on the island. While you are at the island, you should visit the Giant Clam and Marine Invertebrate Hatchery to learn more about giant clams, especially some rare species, and see a few endemic species of giant clams at the nursery's tank area. Besides that, the hatchery also conducts seaweed farming.



Mataking Island

It is located on the frontier of the Malaysia-Philippines border. The long journey to reach this paradise culminates in a luxury resort, also the sole accommodation on the island. A sandbar which emerges from retreating tides links the larger island where the resort sits to the tiny and aptly named Mataking Kecil. Underwater, divers can frolic with pelagic fauna as well as muck dive. Unique attractions include a submerged post office, turtle hatchery and spa.

Sipadan Island

Situated 5° north of the equator in the Sulawesi Sea (Celebes), it is rated as one of the world's top dive sites. An oceanic island, it is praised by divers all over the world. This 40-acre, oceanic island is composed of living corals which grow atop an obsolete undersea volcano which rises 600 metres from the seabed.

With over 3000 species of fish, an unusually crowded number of green and hawksbill turtles, and hundreds of multi-coloured coral species, divers will have an underworld field day where sea-life is in abundance.

Sipadan Islands is perfect for avid divers who wish to add a tropical dive to their dive logs. Highly sought-after dive spots include Barracuda Point, Turtle Cave, West Ridge, Hanging Gardens, Lobster Lair, Staghorn Crest, South Point, Coral Gardens, White Tip Avenue, Mid-reef or the Turtle Patch. Common marine life

include manta rays, sharks, green turtles, schools of jackfish, barracudas, and even the occasional shiver of scalloped hammerhead sharks.

Although Open Water Divers are permitted to traverse the waters of Sipadan, it is advised to have at least an Advance Open Water dive certificate.

Do note that staying on Sipadan is no longer possible. To get there, visitors have to stay in a dive resort on the nearby islands of Mabul, Kapalai, Matakina and Pom Pom. Dive operators will arrange a day trip to Sipadan Island.

Mabul Island

It is renowned for its amazing array of macro-life, making it an underwater photographer's dream location for 'shooting' some of the rarest ecological species. Flamboyant cuttlefish, blue-ringed octopus, spike-fin gobies, frogfish and moray eels are just some of the spectacular critters you will encounter beneath the waters of Mabul.

It is a small oval-shaped island fringed by sandy beaches and perched on the north-west corner of a larger 200-hectare reef. The reef is on the edge of the continental shelf and the seabed surrounding the reef slopes out to 25-30m deep. In addition, Mabul is also a local island-village. Accommodation ranges from backpacker styled lodges to water bungalows. Thanks to its proximity to Sipadan, avid divers tend to factor in both islands in a single trip.



Of course, there are many other beautiful islands in Sabah worth visiting, namely Tiga Island, Layang-Layang Island, Turtle Island and Lankayan Island. Be prepared to be amazed by the beauty of the

islands and the pristine waters around it.

With less than 80 days towards the next AGM, we hope that you will not miss this opportunity to attend this year's AGM in Kota Kinabalu. See you here soon! **BMM**



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“Kopivosian nokoikot hiti pogun Sabah”

It literally means “Welcome to Sabah” in the native language of Kadazan and here, we, the organising committee for this year’s National MMA Convention & Scientific Congress in conjunction of the 63rd MMA Annual General Meeting and Scientific Congress would like to warmly welcome you to the land below the wind.

With less than 60 days until the upcoming AGM, we hope that all the exciting articles from the past few months have enticed you to attend the AGM in person this time. Besides the meeting itself, the organising committee from Sabah Branch had filled up the whole AGM week with lots of recreational activities not just for you, but also for your whole family.



Just to give you an idea of the things that will be happening during the AGM, we will run through the whole programme in a nutshell here. If you have not planned your trip yet, here is the opportunity to spend a few minutes of your precious time to digest this short write-up.

Allow us to suggest your itinerary so that you and your family can have an enjoyable and fruitful visit to Sabah. First things first, we suggest that you book your upcoming flight on 5 September 2023, Tuesday and there are plenty of flight options to choose from, e.g. Malaysia Airlines, Air Asia and the newbie, My Airlines. If you are flying from Subang or Penang, then there are some flight services by Firefly Airlines and Batik Air. Flight tickets per pax start from RM129.

Upon setting foot in Kota Kinabalu, you can stay at the Hilton Hotel where the AGM will be held, or the nearby Holiday Inn Express or Shangri-la Hotel. There are also plenty of home-stay styled lodging available if you prefer that type of accommodation. We plan to have a Bowling Tournament on this evening as part of the Annual Games at Centre Point Shopping Mall. The game fee is only RM30 per participant.

At daybreak on 6 September 2023, we will start off with Walkathon event at Perdana Park, Tanjung Aru from 6.30am. This public park has a spectacular view of the sunrise and at its centre is a lake surrounded by comfortable jogging paths which lead through landscaped gardens, gazebos, playgrounds and exercise corners. There are water filter stations that dispenses free drinking water to visitors, but we recommend bringing your own water to stay hydrated.

A prize medal will be given to all those who had participated. After the morning exercise, we will head back to the hotel to start off the National MMA Convention & Scientific Congress from 8.00am-1.00pm, followed by PPS and SCHOMOS AGM in the afternoon. As for the spouse and family activity during those AGMs, we have planned a visit to Mari-Mari



Photos courtesy of Col (Dr) Shamsul Bahary bin Muhamad

Cultural Visit and transport is provided. In the evening will be the State Dinner with MMA Oration in the hotel.

On 7 September 2023, we will proceed with a Beach Walk and Clean-up session at Teluk Likas. Its a great way to showcase MMA's efforts and concern to keep our beaches clean and promote environmental friendliness for all living beings. Next, we will continue the convention from 8.00am-5.00pm. There will be a trip to the Sabah State Museum in the afternoon as part of the spouse and family activity. At 4.00pm, we will begin the opening ceremony of the 63rd National AGM. We will then adjourn the meeting for the informal night buffet dinner with the theme "Cultural Extravaganza". So, make sure you have your perfect and most stunning attire prepared; we hope you can be crowned as the best-dressed person that night.

Come Friday, we will continue with the National AGM till the end of the agenda and for the spouse and family activity, there will be a boat trip to the Tunku Abdul Rahman Marine Park for island hopping. At night, it will be the moment everybody is waiting for and that is the MMA Annual Banquet to whom our Health Minister, Dr Zaliha Mustafa will be in attendance. The colour theme for this night will be black and white.

Lastly, for those adventure seekers, we also hope that we could gather some of you for SCUBA diving or even sea-walking or snorkelling on the following morning. There will be some other water sport activities for your liking too, such as jet-skiing, para-sailing and banana float rides available to be enjoyed. For all those golf enthusiasts, we can organise a game on that Saturday morning too.

After all that, we suggest that you can fly back to your home by Sunday afternoon and make this trip a moment to be remembered by you and your love ones. Details for all of these events is available on the AGM website, <https://nationalagm2023.mma.org.my/>.

Do check the website periodically for the latest information or changes if there are any. If you have not noticed yet, when you open your MMA App now on your mobile phone, there is a pop-up message informing the details for the registration for the National AGM. So please do not miss this opportunity to attend this year's AGM in Kota Kinabalu. Let us remind you that the closing date for the registration of AGM is on 30 August 2023.

See you soon! **BMMA**



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Tadau Kaamatan

Celebrating Sabah's Diversity



Kaamatan, also known as *Tadau Kaamatan*, is a harvest festival celebrated by the Kadazan-Dusun tribe in Sabah. The Kadazan-Dusun are the largest indigenous group in Sabah. 'Kaamatan' is derived from the word *omot*, which means 'harvest' in Kadazan-Dusun.

The organising committee of the Kaamatan festival has set this year's theme as Kaamatan Inculturates Unity. The festival is normally hosted in one of the 27 districts in Sabah, with Tuaran hosting the celebrations this year. Tuaran is located 32 km from Kota Kinabalu, and this district is home to the Dusuns, Lotud and Bajau ethnic groups.

Tuaran is well-known for its food, Sunday market (referred to by locals as *Tamu*), and traditional handicrafts such as Tuaran beads (intricately woven into colourful and intricate jewellery, accessories, and decorative designs) and *tenduang* (a conical food cover featuring brightly coloured strips of footstool palm leaves stretched over a frame).

About Tadau Kaamatan

According to a Kadazan legend, this harvest festival gives thanks to Kinoingan (a deity) and his wife, Suminundu, for the sacrifice of their daughter Huminodun. Her gift was to offer parts of her body that was transformed into food for people during a severe drought and famine. The harvest was abundant in the year of Huminodun's selfless sacrifice, and her essence is said to continue to reside in the form of *Bambaazon*, the spirit of the paddy.

A Kadazan priestess called *Bobohizan* is one of the most influential people of the Kaamatan Festival. She determines and officiates the official harvest festival date. As a senior and deeply respected

person of this festival, some locals advise against approaching the priestess or taking photos with her if you do see her at the festival. However, times may have changed with the advent of social media, so ask first and observe what locals are doing, as the priestess may be open to photo-taking now.

Many Kadazan-Dusuns in Sabah have converted to Islam or Christianity, but still celebrate *Tadau Kaamatan* out of tradition, history, and culture. Many communities of different beliefs and religions also participate in these celebrations. They come in their stunning and intricate traditional attire. The women are beautiful, while the men may wear elaborate headpieces that rival the style of top fashion brands.

Festival Activities

Sabah harvest festival is a great experience that highlights the state's rich cultural heritage. It is also a great fun time for visitors. Activities at the 2023 harvest festival Malaysia include:

- Sumazau (a traditional folk dance)
- Magunatip (a bamboo dance that gets progressively faster and faster. Agility and skills are needed)
- Mipulous (knuckle wrestling. There is also the more common arm-wrestling competition)
- Rampanau (bamboo stilt walking)
- Migayat Lukug (tug of war)
- Sugandoi (a singing competition grouped into different ages: children, teenagers, adults, and veterans)
- Unduk Ngadau (a beauty pageant)

Unduk Ngadau is a famous beauty pageant and an acclaimed recognisable cultural event unique to Sabah. This significant event takes place at the end of the Sabah harvest festival.

Unduk Ngadau is derived from the phrase *runduk tadau*, which means 'the girl crowned by the sunlight'.

This beauty pageant looks to remember Huminodun's sacrifice by finding a maiden that resembles her. According to folklore, Huminodun has a beautiful heart, mind, and soul. Contestants must be able to speak their local dialect, and aspiring young women must compete at a district level before entering as one of the 46 contestants in the finals.

The *Unduk Ngadau* beauty pageant's grand closing will be at the Kadazandusun Cultural Association (KDCA) in Penampang. KDCA has a cultural village about a 20-minute drive from Kota Kinabalu. This cultural village offers visitors an insight into Sabah's various ethnic tribes.

Tadau Kaamatan is a celebration not only for the Kadazan Dusuns, but also a celebration for everyone. Sabah awaits and welcomes all with open arms.

Lastly, mark your calendar so you won't miss the upcoming AGM from 6-8 Sept 2023 at Hilton KK! **BMMMA**

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