



*The Malaysian contingent make their entry into the Alexander Stadium during the opening of the 2022 Commonwealth Games in Birmingham on Thursday. PIC BY ASWADI ALIAS*

# FINALLY, IT'S GAMES TIME!

+ A dazzling show opens the 22nd edition of the Commonwealth Games

## BIRMINGHAM

**T**HE Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games got underway with a dazzling opening ceremony at the newly refurbished Alexander Stadium, Perry Barr in front of 30,000 spectators on Thursday.

The opening ceremony, which explored the “DNA” of Birmingham and West Midlands, enjoyed the golden touches of Martin Green, who earned an international reputation as head of ceremonies for London 2012 Olympic Games and Steven Knight, the creator and writer of one of the most famous television series, “Peaky Blinders”.

Featuring the city’s rich and diverse history, the vibrant show was divided into a few scenes, namely “Call to Gather”, “Everything to Everybody”, “Hear My Voice” and “Raging Bull” along with an impressive light show and spectacular fireworks — all crammed into two and the half hours of a magical evening.

The show centered around the story of Stella, played by Lorell Boyce, and “The Dreamers”, a group of young athletes from around the Commonwealth who traversed into Birmingham’s past and present.

Immediately after that, the organisers paid a fitting tribute to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, who celebrated the Platinum Jubilee marking the 70th anniversary of her reign, by sharing the

story of the Queen’s passion and commitment to the Commonwealth, beginning with her first Commonwealth address as a young princess.

What followed was the emergence of giant puppets that represented famous literary figures, musicians, and scientists in history, including a special appearance by worldwide ‘silent’ movie icon, Charlie Chaplin.

Just before the start of the ‘Hear My Voice’ scene, which recognised the arrival of newcomers to

Birmingham and unsung heroes of the Covid-19 pandemic, Pakistani activist for female education and 2014 Nobel Peace Prize laureate Malala Yousafzai made a surprise cameo as she delivered a powerful speech, sharing her hopes on women’s participation in every society.

The athletes and officials then marched into the stadium to thunderous applause and rousing cheers, with Australia the first to enter the stadium while Malaysia were the 42nd

team to do so.

The Malaysian contingent, with woman squash player Aifa Azman and powerlifting ace Bonnie Bunyau Gustin as flagbearers, led the way as 38 other athletes and officials, including chef de mission (CDM) Datuk Shahrul Zaman Yahya and his deputy Gerard Monteiro, followed suit.

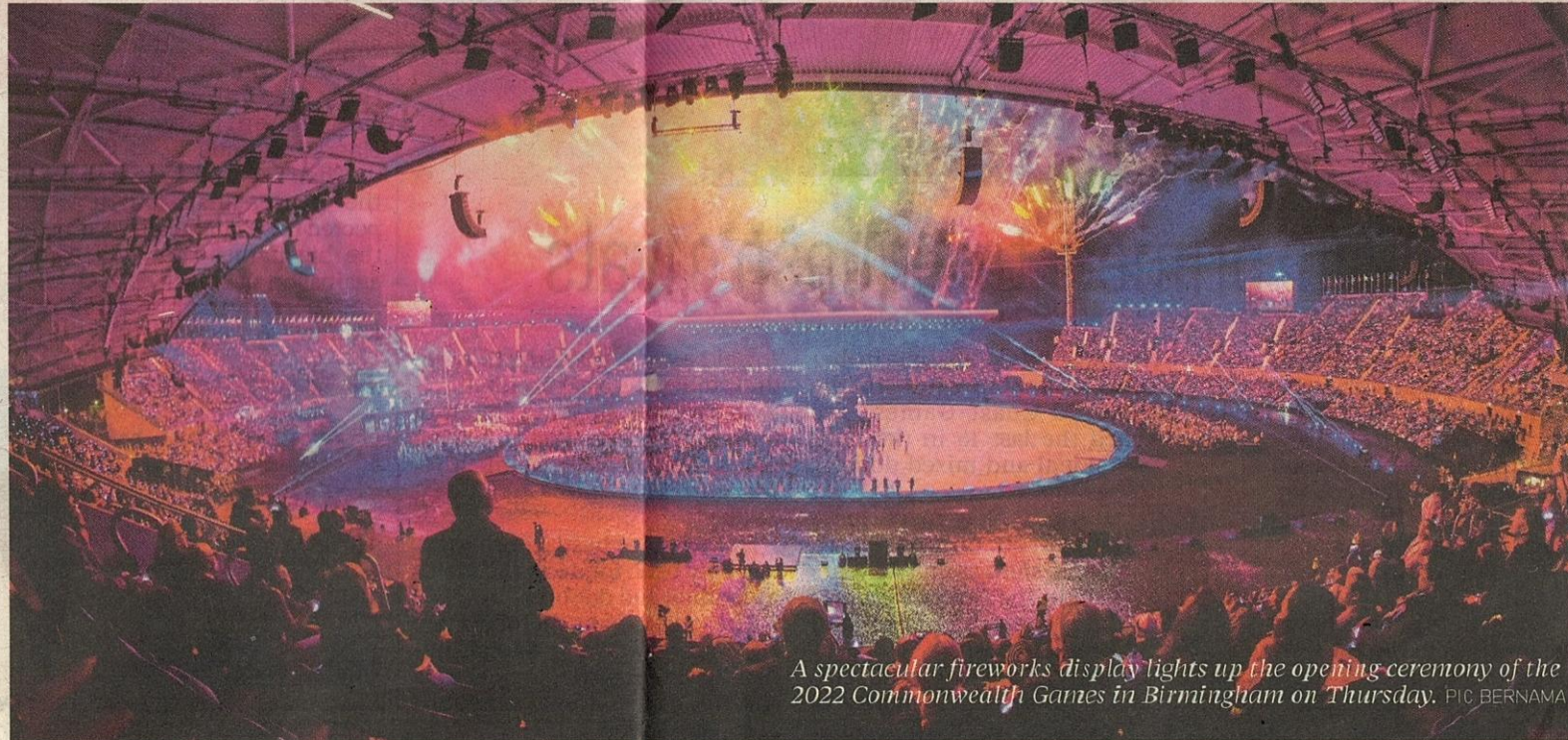
The Malaysian men and women looked dashing in their white five-button baju Melayu and short modern kebaya that featured the national flower — hibiscus — which was given a new life with a hand-painted batik-like abstract interpretation by a local designer.

England’s top male diver Tom Daley was among the athletes given the honour of carrying the Queen’s Baton before it was finally passed to home-grown former heptathlete Denise Lewis.

Lewis then handed the baton containing a message from the Queen to Prince of Wales Prince Charles, who read out the message before declaring the 22nd edition of the Games open.

British music icons Duran Duran delighted their hometown fans when they capped off a wonderful ceremony by taking centre stage to perform “Tonight United” and “Ordinary World” as spectacular fireworks illuminated the ‘Brum’ sky.

About 6,500 athletes from 72 countries and territories will take part in the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games, which will run until Aug 8. **Bername**



A spectacular fireworks display lights up the opening ceremony of the 2022 Commonwealth Games in Birmingham on Thursday. PIC BERNAMA