

Palace hails SEA Games participants for ‘wonderful job’

MANILA — Malacañang on Thursday congratulated the athletes and coaches from 11 participating nations who competed at the 30th edition of Southeast Asian (SEA) Games which closed on Wednesday night here.

In a statement, Presidential Spokesperson Salvador Panelo said all the SEA Games participants bring “pride and honor” to their respective nations.

“The Palace congratulates all the athletes and their support staff. All of you did a wonderful job giving pride and honor to your respective countries. Your very presence here alone means you are all winners,” Panelo said in a statement.

“We are happy in the Philippines not only because all participating countries secured medals but for the other reason that their athletes will be bringing wonderful and unforgettable memories with them to their homes. Indeed, #WeWinAsOne (hashtag We Win As One),” he added.

The Philippines hosted the 30th SEA Games held from November 30 to December 11.

The country’s hosting of this year’s regional sports meet bore fruit, as it formally clinched the overall championship during the conclusion of the competitions on Wednesday.

The Philippine delegation claimed the top spot, the latest since 2005 and the second in the history of SEA Games, after it snagged 149 gold, 117 silver, and 121 bronze, or a total of 387 medals in the 30th edition of regional sports competition.

The 149 gold medals were higher than the 112 recorded in 2005 when the Philippines also hosted the biennial regional multi-sport event.

Entire Filipinos proud of PH ‘excellent’ achievements

Panelo lauded the members of the Philippine contingent by exhausting all efforts to bag the overall championship.

In a separate state-

ment late Wednesday night, Presidential Communications Operations Office (PCOO) Secretary Martin Andanar said the entire country is proud of the “excellent” achievements of Filipino athletes who did their best to secure the first spot in the 30th SEA Games.

“We would like to congratulate everyone for their participation in the Southeast Asian Games,” the PCOO chief said.

“We are also extending our praises to the Philippine delegation for claiming the overall championship of this edition of the SEA Games. You have shown that Filipinos are topnotch athletes and you have made us and all of our countrymen around the world proud of your excellent achievements,” he added.

Filipino athletes are expected to meet President Rodrigo Duterte who will honor and give them incentives after their success in the SEA Games.

Republic Act 10699 grants PHP300,000, PHP150,000, and

PHP60,000 for SEA Games’ gold, silver, and bronze medalists, reaoectively.

Duterte vowed to provide additional cash for winning Filipino athletes, while the Philippine Olympic Committee also committed additional PHP300,000 for gold medalists.

‘All winners’

Finishing second in SEA Games was Vietnam with 98 gold, 85 silver, and 105 bronze medals. It was followed by Thailand (92-103-123), Indonesia (72-84-111), Malaysia (55-58-71), and Singapore (53-46-68). Rounding out the field were Myanmar (4-18-51), Cambodia (4-6-36), Brunei (2-5-6), Laos (1-5-28), and Timor Leste (0-1-5).

Andanar viewed the participating nations as “all winners” as they already made their respective citizens proud by exhibiting the “spirit of sportsmanship.”

“We congratulate as well the respective delegations of Asean member-states and Timor Leste for taking part in the SEA Games. We are confident that

you have all made your countries proud. Truly, we have all shown that ‘We Win as One,’” he said.

Organizers, volunteers hailed

The 11 participating countries competed in 530 events in 56 sports for this year’s edition of the regional sports meet.

The Philippine SEA Games Organizing Committee (PHISGOC), with the help of volunteers, took charge of the preparations and execution of the country’s hosting of the 30th regional sports meet.

Andanar commended PHISGOC and volunteers for their hard

work to ensure that the Philippines’ hosting would be “exemplary”.

“This would have not been possible, if not for the hard work done by PHISGOC, which has translated into the Games successes. Hence, we extend our deepest gratitude to the PHISGOC and also to all the volunteers that have made our hosting of the 30th SEA Games truly exemplary,” he said.

PHISGOC, chaired by House Speaker Alan Peter Cayetano, earlier earned criticisms for logistical issues that had emerged prior to the formal opening of the

SEA Games on November 30.

Duterte apologized over the alleged SEA Games blunders, and vowed to conduct an investigation into the incident.

The President, however, expressed confidence that Cayetano was not involved in corrupt activities, stressing that PHISGOC merely committed “unintentional” mistakes.

Despite these, Panelo said “high emotions, the broken records, the blood, sweat and tears of our athletes and their coaches” are worth remembering. (PNA)

Victim's husband 'person of interest' in Makati kidnap case

MANILA -- The Makati City police on Wednesday said it is looking into the husband of the Chinese woman who was kidnapped by the unidentified suspects as a ‘person of interest’ in the case.

"He was silent when we asked who may have possibly taken his wife. It's because the woman was just casually dragged to the van," Makati City Police Criminal Investigation Unit chief, Maj. Gideon Ines said, referring to Chen Tangbin, husband of the victim identified as Zhou Mei.

Ines said Chen is jobless while his wife is manager in a Philippine Offshore Gaming Operator (POGO). He said the personal life of the couple is included in their investigation to possibly identify the motive and suspects in the abduction.

“Maaaring pina-kidnap niya sa kaniyang mga kaibigan at hihingan ng pera ‘yung kaniyang boss. Kasi kikiidnapin mo ‘yung biktima eh wala namang capability ‘yan para makapagbigay (He may have asked his

friends to kidnap her to ask money from her boss. Why would you kidnap the victim who has no capability to give money?),” Ines said.

Meanwhile, Makati City police chief Col. Rogelio Simon said Chen gave “inconsistent answers” in the course of investigation.

"There were some questions na ibinato namin sa kaniya (which we asked him). We kept repeating the same questions. Every time he answers, the details change -- his location, his whereabouts at a specific time and what he did before. He mentioned a date and place and we verified that he was not there during that hour," he said in Filipino.

Simon said Chen claimed he secured first his mother-in-law before going to the police due to fear that she will also be targeted by his wife’s abductors.

Zhou was forcibly taken by still unidentified Chinese men onboard a van along Paseo de Roxas in Makati City on Monday evening.

In a related development, Makati Mayor Abby

Binay on Wednesday appealed to city residents, investors, workers and visitors to download the Makatizen app to gain instant access to emergency hotlines and promptly report crimes to authorities.

The mayor reiterated her call following the alleged abduction of a Chinese woman Monday evening inside the central business district, which was caught on video by a witness at the scene and has gone viral on the internet.

“When we witness a crime in progress, the best course of action should be to contact the authorities. We can instantly do it using the Makatizen app’s MakaSOS feature that allows us to contact police hotlines with just one click,” Binay said in a statement. Binay said the Makatizen app was created to bring information and public services, including emergency assistance and response, closer to the people who live, work, do business or spend their leisure time in the country’s premier financial center.

EU eager to engage PH in fighting climate change

MANILA -- The European Union (EU) is ready to engage with the Philippines in raising Filipinos' awareness on the ill-effects of climate change and ways to mitigate it as it commemorates the Human Rights Day in the country.

On Wednesday, the bloc hosted the first-ever human rights forum dedicated to the fight against climate change in hopes of stirring response from the Filipino people.

The event held in Makati was attended by Commission on Human Rights chairperson Chito Gascon, members of the diplomatic corps and representatives of the De-

partment of Environment and Natural Resources who were joined by at least 160 participants from the private sector and advocacy groups.

In a speech, EU's Chargé d' Affaires in Manila Thomas Wiersing underscored that the Philippines is one of the countries identified as most vulnerable to flooding and potential submersion if climate change is not mitigated.

"And in these countries, the poor and disadvantaged risk to be even more affected than others. This is why we have decided to dedicate this year's

commemoration of Human Rights Day for the first time to the topic Climate Change: The new challenge for human rights: Act Now!" he said.

The United Nations Human Rights Council itself has recognized that human rights obligations have the potential to strengthen policy-making in the area of climate change and sustainable outcomes.

"The EU stands for democracy, the rule of law, and the respect of fundamental freedoms and human rights. Yes, we may not agree on all issues when it comes

to human rights -- and the EU's position is well known -- but the EU is eager to engage with the Philippines to support sustainable development and to fight climate change," he said.

In this light, Wiersing underscored the need for the public to fight for their right to live in a sustainable environment regardless of wherever they come from.

"But climate protection is not only the job of governments. We all need to make an effort -- be it in our homes, communities and workplaces. If we move together, we will also move faster, and this is in the interest of all of us," he added. (PNA)