

'WONDERFUL TONIGHT' AT ISTANA

14 July 2015

Over 500 athletes and officials gather to celebrate successful campaign at SEA Games

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After more than a year of focus and intensive preparation for the SEA Games, athletes and officials were finally able to hang loose, bask in the success of the biennial affair and let their hair down yesterday night.

Many did so literally, switching their spikes and sportswear for heels, dress shoes and slightly more formal attire at an Istana Garden Party held in their honour.

More than 500 athletes and officials were part of the post-SEA Games celebration, toasting to their historic achievement of 84 golds, 73 silvers and 102 bronzes.

The event, held outdoors at the lawn of the Istana grounds, was also attended by President Tony Tan Keng Yam, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and Deputy Prime Minister Teo Chee Hean, who is patron of the Singapore National Olympic Council (SNOC).

Minister for Social and Family Development Tan Chuan-jin, who is also SNOC president, as well as Minister for Culture, Community

and Youth Lawrence Wong, were also there.

While some athletes got in line to have their caricatures drawn, others got their photos taken at a booth. Mr Lee was by far the most "sought after", with many athletes eager to take "wefies" with him.

Discus thrower and sprinter Calvin Kang surprised the crowd with a performance on stage, where the athletes also showed another side of their abilities when they performed two SEA Games theme songs.

Mr Wong, well known as a music aficionado, also teamed up with local act HubbaBubbas to perform two songs, impressing shooter Jasmine Ser when he performed a rendition of Eric Clapton's Wonderful Tonight, her favourite song.

In his address, he joked that the high of the SEA Games might have left many athletes with "withdrawal symptoms".

Said Colin Tung, who competed in the 3,000m steeplechase: "I took a break from running after the SEA Games, which is why I felt a dip in my fitness when I ran the half-marathon at the Sundown Marathon.

"Athletes train with a goal in mind and so many of us trained with the SEA Games as our main goal for the past year.

"But you have got to find new goals, move on, take whatever you've learnt from the journey and apply it in future," added the 27-year-old, who will begin training this week for the year-end Singapore Marathon.

But not all athletes have been able to enjoy much of a breather.

Bowlers and some canoeists, for instance, did not attend the event last night, competing in Japan and training in Hungary respectively.

Sailor Samantha Yom flew off immediately after the event to compete in a regatta in Portugal while shooters like Ser and Martina Lindsay Veloso, targeting Olympic quali-

fication, will be leaving for Azerbaijan in two weeks for competition.

Netballers, too, are deep in preparation for the World Cup that will be held next month in Sydney.

Said shooter Charmaine Soh: "We had a one-week break after the Games but are back in motion now."

"The World Cup is a different tournament compared to the SEA Games but we still can't get complacent," she added.

Mr Wong also said in his address that the authorities will remain committed to supporting the athletes for competitions and campaigns in the future.

"A lot of what we've achieved is be-

cause we've invested in a high performance system. The results of the Games show that we're moving on the right track.

"Sport Singapore, the Singapore Sports Institute will be working with all of you, the SNOC and national sports associations to see what we can learn from the Games, and apply the lessons learnt to further strengthen our system.

"We don't just want to succeed at the SEA Games level... we want to ensure that more of you can go on to excel in future SEA Games and on bigger stages."

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NEXT STAGE

We want to ensure that more of you can go on to excel in future SEA Games and on bigger stages.



MR LAWRENCE WONG, Minister for Culture, Community and Youth



(Clockwise from above): At the Istana Garden Party, taking a wefie with Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong; Deputy Prime Minister Teo Chee Hean snapping the Quah siblings; and Minister Lawrence Wong performing on the guitar. ST PHOTOS: KUA CHEE SIONG

