

14 SEP 2002

Sukma-Close

NINTH SUKMA CONCLUDES IN A COLOURFUL CEREMONY

KOTA KINABALU, Sept 14 (Bernama) -- The Ninth Malaysia Games (Sukma) held here for the past 13 days came to a close in a ceremony filled with pomp and splendour at the Likas Stadium here tonight.

The people of Sabah gave their high commitment in ensuring the success of the biennial games, the biggest championship ever held in the state below the wind, by coming in droves to witness the colourful closing ceremony.

As in the opening ceremony on Saturday, the started flocking to the stadium as early as in the evening to ensure they did not miss the historic moment for the state, which proved they were capable of staging sports events like Sukma.

The strong influence of well-known singer Siti Nurhaliza Taruddin, who performed at the closing ceremony, added colour to the closing event as her fans from all over Sabah, including from as far as Tawau, Sandakan and Semporna, thronged the city to usher in the merriment.

The 15-minute cultural and traditional performance themed "Sabah Truly Malaysia" kicked off the celebrations soon after the arrival of Youth and Sports Minister Datuk Hishammuddin Tun Hussein who represented Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Songs and music from various ethnic groups, including Kadazans, Dusuns, Muruts, Bumiputera Muslims and Chinese were belted out, providing entertainment for athletes, team officials and volunteers.

Twenty contingents comprising 5,000 athletes performed the march past followed by presentation of prizes for the Best Men and Women Athlete, Promosing Athlete and Overall Champion.

After Hishammuddin finished reading Dr Mahathir's text of speech and declared the 2002 Sukma closed, the games flag was brought down and the torch was put off at 10.03pm.

This was followed by dazzling display of fireworks that lit the skies of the Likas Stadium.

Hishammuddin then handed over the games flag to Negeri Sembilan, the host of the 10th Sukma, represented by Menteri Besar Tan Sri Mohamed Isa Abdul Samad.

Negeri Sembilan, who would welcome Sukma athletes in 2004, was given the opportunity to perform their traditional dance for more than 20 minutes.

The performance of motorised para gliders and release of colourful balloons and fireworks brought more cheer to the closing ceremony with the crowd responding with a thunderous applause.

The spectators, who brought along their families and relatives to witness the historic event, did not budge from their seats even after Hishammuddin and other VIPs had left the stadium.

They were engrossed with the one-hour performance of their favourite artiste Siti Nurhaliza and some were reluctant to leave the stadium not realising that the games, which had boosted Sabah's image, had come to an end.

Syabas Sabah as the Ninth Sukma themed "Excellence In The New Millennium" proceeded smoothly albeit minor hiccups that should not have happened.

Certainly, a tough job awaits Negeri Sembilan who at least must match Sabah's capabilities and success in hosting the games.

-- BERNAMA
HRS MK TS