

Athletes hailed for biggest haul of medals in SEA Games



PRESIDENT Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo poses with the Filipino athletes who bagged 48 gold, 54 silver and 75 bronze medals in the recent 22nd Southeast Asian Games in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam. Also in photo are Philippine Sports Commission (PSC)

chairman Eric Buhain, First Gentleman Atty. Jose Miguel Arroyo, Philippine Olympic Committee president Celso Dayrit, International Olympic Committee representative Frank Elizaide and other PSC officials.

Saying the most natural resource of the Philippines is its skilled people, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo thanked the Filipino athletes who spearheaded the country's successful campaign in the just-concluded 22nd Southeast Asian Games in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh in Vietnam.

"Thank you for bringing honor to the Philippines. Thank you for the fourth place, and thank you for the country's biggest haul of medals in the history of the Southeast Asian Games," the President said after she and the First Gentleman Atty. Jose Miguel Arroyo received the athletes in Malacañang during a courtesy call last December 19.

Calling the Team Philippines "beloved world-class athletes of the country," the President said the nation has much to be proud with their harvest of 48 gold, 54 silver and 75 bronze medals in the games.

"The most important natural resource of the Philippines is its skilled people, and you have shown in a world stage your skills as athletes," the President

pointed out.

Of the 48 gold medals, athletes Marcus Valda, Arwin Ting and Ryan Fabriga won two gold medals each in wrestling, wushu and diving respectively.

The President and the First Gentleman threw their support behind Team Philippines all the way with Atty. Arroyo even flying to Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh to cheer the athletes.

Philippine Sports Commission Chairman Eric Buhain presented the athletes to the First Couple saying the PSC has focused its attention on the SEAG since November last year.

Buhain, however, gave all the credit to the athletes, who conquered the odds and showed they were not distracted by what others said were the demoralizing effect of the delay in their allowances.

The PSC also thanked the participation of Eugene Torre, Rogelio Antonio, Mark Paragua, Bong Villamayor and Richard Gomez who competed in chess and fencing and got gold in the process.