

Triumphant finale to a grand show

5.22.9.98

KUALA LUMPUR: To the tune of *Auld Lang Syne*, athletes, officials and volunteers mingled together on the field in the centre of the National Stadium in Bukit Jalil as they wished each other farewell.

The atmosphere in the stadium was tinged with relief, joy and sadness as the athletes and officials from 70 countries waved goodbye to the spectators as they walked by, thousands of camera flashlights sparkling throughout the stadium like specks of diamonds.

The 100,000 people who packed the stadium went into a frenzy, shouting *Malaysia Boleh* when the Malaysian contingent passed by.

The 20,000 volunteers then joined athletes and officials in the middle of the field to form the Tribune of Honour.

Commonwealth Games Federation (CGF) chairman Michael Fennell and Olympic Council of Malaysia (OCM) president Tan Sri Hamzah Abu Samah moved to the Tribune of Honour, while flag-bearers of the different nations formed an arc in front of the tribune as Hamzah declared the return of the national flags.

It was a solemn moment when Royal Malaysian Navy personnel lowered the CGF ceremonial flag, while the choir sang the official Kuala Lumpur '98 theme song *Forever As One*.

The flag party then trooped the CGF ceremonial flag around the track and back to the tribune.

Manchester city mayor Gordon Conquest and KL '98 organising committee chairman Tan Sri Hashim Mohd Ali then moved to the tribune. Fennell handed over the CGF ceremo-



nia flag to mayor Tan Sri Kamaruzzaman Shariff.

Kamaruzzaman handed the flag to Gordon, as Manchester is the next host in 2002.

This was followed by the closing speeches by Hashim and Fennell. Hashim then presented Manchester city's organising chairman for the Games a few *rebana ubi* as mementos, while Manchester's representative and football legend Sir Bobby Charlton returned as memento to Hashim a crystal entitled the "Spirit of Friendship."

Queen Elizabeth then declared the Games officially closed.

Fireworks lit the sky and the stadium as spectators cheered on.

The King and Queen, together with Britain's Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip left the stadium after the British and Malaysian national anthems were played.

Spectators joined in as athletes and officials sang the

Farewell Song and Auld Lang Syne after which local artistes Raihan, Amelina, Jamal Abdillah and Sheila Majid rocked the crowd.

Donna Lewis and the Corrs took centre stage later, setting the mood for party time.

Earlier, the ceremony had started with bagpipes strains from the First Malay Regiment Military Band, playing Malay folk songs like *Rasa Sayang* and *Lenggang Kangkong*.

The VIPs, including Hashim, Kamaruzzaman, Hamzah and Muhyiddin, arrived soon after.

A musical show then commenced on stage with dancers bearing *sirih junjung* and *bunga mas* dancing to local folk songs.

The last leg of the Games then got under way when the guards of honour marched in, followed by the arrival of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and wife Datin Seri Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali.

The two royal couples ar-

rived soon after.

After the brass-band display and a Malaysian dancers performing the *joget*, the Manchester delegation made its entrance as the next host of the Games.

Escorted by *silat* dancers, the delegation made its way to the stage where Charlton unveiled Manchester's 17th Commonwealth Games logo.

Their attention riveted on the giant screen, the crowd was treated to a 12-minute cultural presentation via satellite from the Manchester City Town Hall. Prince Edward appeared on the screen to introduce the city.

The stadium was again plunged into a feast of colours as spectators and athletes join in a celebration to mark the closing of the first Games held in Asia.

Even the weather was perfect for the ceremony, just like on the opening day.