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Dr Mahathir honours volunteers, medallists

IT turned out to be a grand Commonwealth Games celebration dinner, with a guest list of over 20,000, including Prime Minister Datuk Seri Mahathir Mohamed, and where RM2.2 million exchanged hands.

The money was a token of the country's appreciation to the athletes, coaches and associations who contributed to Malaysia's haul of 10 gold, 14 silver and 12 bronze medals at last month's Games.

The cash reward was paid under the National Sports Council's incentive scheme for sportsmen who excel.

Under this scheme, a gold medal at the Commonwealth Games is worth RM80,000, a silver RM40,000 and bronze RM20,000.

(For a gold-medal winning team with more than five members, each received RM15,000).

Of the RM2.2 million paid out - RM1.71 million was given to athletes and the rest to coaches and associations.

The dinner was also to thank all the volunteers and officials who helped to make the Games a resounding success.

Malaysia's 10 golds came from 17 athletes and they were rewarded a total of RM845,000.

Silver medallists were paid a total of RMRM648,000 and bronze medallists RM240,000.

The big winners of the night were shooter Nurul Huda Bahrain and weightlifter Mohamed Hidayat Hamidon who also broke Commonwealth Games records.

Besides the RM80,000 for the golds, they each received a Commonwealth Games edition Proton Perdana worth RM70,000 and an extra RM10,000 for setting records.

Hidayat received another RM40,000 for the silver medal in the overall event in the 69kg category.

Other athletes who walked home with big cash prizes were bowler Kenny Ang and shuttler Wong Choon Hann.

Ang walked away with RM120,000 - RM80,000 for the singles gold and RM40,000 for his share of the doubles gold with Ben Heng.

Wong, the surprise singles badminton champion got RM80,000 and another RM15,000 for being part of the men's team who won the gold.