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SEA-Gymnastics (Rhythmic)

M'SIA WIN GOLD, SILVER IN GYMNASTICS

By: Leslean Arshad

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 15 (Bernama) -- Malaysia's Goh Yi Wei and Celestie Chan ruled the gymnastics floor today to win the gold and silver respectively in the SEA Games rhythmic individual all-round competition.

The sterling performance of the duo pushed Thailand's Pattra Sarikaputra into third place for the bronze medal.

Yi Wei scored 98.2 points in the four routines -- rope, hoop, ball and clubs -- to beat teammate Chan who scored 96.575. Pattra collected 95.6 points.

The 17-year-old Yi Wei displayed grace and dexterity, especially in the rope and ball routines, to emerge the top-scorer in both the disciplines.

"I'm happy, really happy," said Yi Wei after the prize-giving ceremony in the presence of Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi who had come to spur on the athletes.

However, she had fumbled in the clubs routine, the last discipline that each gymnast had to go through.

"Clubs is the most difficult for me although it's my favourite apparatus. I just don't know ... I always slack in my favourite event," she said, denying that she might have been over-confident during that routine.

Chan, who was suffering from gastric pains, was the top-scorer in the hoop and clubs routines, displaying near flawless agility to capture the attention of the spectators who cheered her on throughout her performance.

Her action in the hoop routine was even recorded on film by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad who was at Stadium Putra for about 30 minutes to watch the rhythmic gymnastics event.

Chan said she felt the gastric pains during her second routine -- the hoop. She said she hoped that the pain would go away by tomorrow when she intends to put up a strong showing in the apparatus finals.

"Judging from what I feel now, I hope to recover. I really want to recover," she said. Chan will participate in the rope, clubs and ball apparatus events.

Thailand's deputy team manager Iamchangpun Chakrit acknowledged the strength of the Malaysian gymnasts.

He said Thailand had targeted for a gold in the apparatus events tomorrow but felt that the task would be difficult although their gymnasts had shown slight improvement.

"Yeah, my girls have improved. May be next time (to get the gold)," he said.

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