

Mighty S'pore

Republic's swimmers steer country to its best opening day performance

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VIENTIANE — Walking past the Singapore contingent, a Malaysian swimming official engaged in friendly banter with his Singapore counterparts.

"We're neighbours, so we should share things. But you're taking everything," he said in jest. He was referring to the performance of the Singapore swimming team, who bagged five golds and four bronze medals on the first day of competition at the 25th SEA Games.

It helped Singapore to its greatest opening day performance at a Games, as the Republic collected 10 gold medals in all yesterday.

"We were looking at three golds today, with a few others in a 50-50 position," said national head coach Ang Peng Siong, after the successful outing at the at the National Sports Complex' aquatic centre last night.

"We had worked and prepared really hard for this SEA Games, and to start so well really gives us the momentum which we hope we can use to carry us through the next four days of competition."



Singapore's golden girls: Quah Ting Wen (from left), Amanda Lim, Mylene Ong, Lynette Lim and Tao Li (inset).

PHOTOS: DON WONG

Only Malaysia's Siow Yi Ting, who won the women's 200 individual medley in a Games record of 2:14.57, and Philippine swim star Miguel Molina, who won the men's 400m IM, blotted an otherwise golden outing for the Republic's swim team.

Last night's performance also meant the team have met almost half of their minimum target of 11 gold medals.

The 50-odd strong Singapore supporters in the gallery, including chef-de-mission Jessie Phua, Senior Parliamentary Secretary for the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports, Teo Ser Luck, and Singapore Sports Council CEO Oon Jin Teik, could barely contain their delight.

Deputy Prime Minister and Singapore National Olympic Council president Teo Chee Hean was all smiles, warmly congratulating

both the men's and women's 4x200m freestyle relay teams with handshakes and some friendly banter just before the medal presentation ceremonies.

Leading the way was rising star Quah Ting Wen, who came away with two golds in the women's 100m freestyle (56.03sec, a new SEA Games record) and the relay, where she teamed up with Lynette Lim, Amanda Lim and Mylene Ong to win in a new SEA Games record of 8:11.75.

"I was pretty nervous myself as it was my first race here, and the first race of the competition," said Ting Wen.

"Still, I'm really glad that we've finally started with the SEA Games after the long wait. We can now settle into our rhythm and look forward to the coming races."

The 17-year-old, named the top female



athlete at this year's inaugural Asian Youth Games in Singapore, believes the Republic's strong start will send a strong and clear message to the rest of the region that it will take a lot for them to usurp their position as the region's top swimming nation.

She said: "Hopefully this will show everyone else that even though half of our team are (SEA Games) rookies, we still are a very strong team."