Participants showered with treats, including air-conditioned rooms

BY LE XIN

WHEN Oscar Gol found a taxi with three travel bags yesterday, the driver asked him which country he was heading to.

The national youth handballer was indeed heading to a destination filled with foreign cultures. However, he will not be flying anywhere.

Oscar, 17, was among the first Singaporean athletes to check into the Youth Olympic Village at Nanyang Technological University (NTU) yesterday.

The Republic’s handball, football and diving athletes moved into the village hours after it officially opened.

For the next two weeks, the village will be the home away from home for some 1,600 local and foreign Youth Olympic Games athletes and team officials.

And Village Mayor Terri Low, the Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Community Development, Youth and Sports, has already promised a historic experience.

The village boasts a village square – the gathering point for Culture and Education Programme (CEP) activities, retail outlets and other events.

The CEP activities, which include talks with YOG ambassadors such as Chinese diver-singer Gao Jingliang, team-building activities at Parks 10 and 101.

al trips to the Marina Barrage, do not start until Friday but they are expected to play a part in the athletes’ YOG experience.

‘It’s almost like a real competition’

The low level of activity at the village yesterday did little to dampen the mood of Jia-Yee who arrived with the rest of the athletes. Upon their arrival, they were each given a map of the transport and a list of emergency contact numbers.

The 200-odd athletes also received YOG-related comfort and services.

South African boxer Pastor Juffs (17), said: “I was blown away by how much stuff we were given.”

For Khek Voon, 18, lunch proved to be the highlight of the day.

The variety of food available at the dining hall includes Asian and European dishes, pastas and soups, and allowed the Dutch shutter to try a bit of everything.

But the biggest cheers were reserved for the air-conditioned rooms.

Malaysian swimmer Kevin Lim (18), said: “It’s amazing. Usually if you stay in a hotel, you won’t expect air-conditioning.

What we’ve seen so far has exceeded my expectations.”

More than 1,000 athletes and team officials from more than 180 national Olympic committees have already arrived in Singapore.

banyanpark.com.sg