

By JASMINE MOHAMMADSALI

The city government is preparing a grand and jubilant hero's welcome for Zamboangueña weightlifter and Olympian Hidilyn Diaz when she returns home on Monday after her victorious participation at the 2016 Rio Olympics.

Diaz, who clinched a silver medal finish for the 53-kg weightlifting competition, will arrive in Zamboanga City with her coach and teammates on Sunday evening, August 14, following a brief stop in Manila on August 11.

Mayor Beng Climaco, expressing great pride and joy for Diaz's win, said preparations to honor Diaz, fellow Olympian Nestor Colonia, and coaches Councilor Elbert Atilano, Sr., and Alfonsito Aldanete are underway to celebrate Diaz's historic victory.

"No hay pa gat kita man specify si cosa [activities], but we really need to give her the proper recognition, the proper welcome. It is really a very special opportunity, a rare opportunity. [It will] also give other athletes the inspiration and the dream that if she was able to make it, they too can make it...it is also very positive for women and for girls that they play a very important role," Climaco said.

Per city ordinance granting cash incentive to medal-haulers in athletic events, Diaz is set to receive P500,000 from the local government, Climaco said, adding that the honor Diaz has given to the country is beyond any monetary amount.

The chief executive likewise congratulated Colonia for his valiant performance which brought honor to the country and the city. He finished 16th out of 19 participants in his category.

The entire nation on Monday morning, August 8, woke up to amazing news from Rio – the city's very own, Hidilyn Diaz, had just won a silver medal for the weightlifting competition, becoming the first Filipina and first Mindanaoan to win an Olympic medal, and the first Olympian to break

the 20-year medal drought of the Philippines.

City Sports Officer Dr. Cecil Atilano said that the local government is committed in its effort to continue building up Zamboangueño athletes as they draw inspiration from the journey of both Diaz and Colonia in weightlifting.

“Hindi lang tayo sa boxing makaka-excel, kundi sa weightlifting din. We have high hopes for our young athletes. Hindi lang si Hidilyn ang prini-prepare natin for big competitions. We have 14 and 12-year olds, maglalaro sa Malaysia. Sila yung prine-prepare natin for Tokyo sa next Olympics and beyond. Yung plano, it doesn't stop kay Hidilyn,” Atilano said.— Jasmine Mohammadsali