

03 JUL 1996
Olympic-Fadzil
NO BIG REWARDS IF SHUTTLERS WIN IN ATLANTA

KUALA LUMPUR, July 3 (Bernama) -- The Atlanta Olympic Games will provide a good avenue for the national shuttlers to redeem themselves after the Thomas Cup debacle but the Badminton Association of Malaysia (BAM) will not go overboard in giving out rewards.

BAM president Datuk Dr Abdullah Fadzil Che Wan admitted that some players had lost track of their actual goal when competing but gave an assurance that the national body would be cautious in future.

"I agree with what the Prime Minister said. We can accept sponsorships and rewards that can spur athletes to do well but not those that can spoil them," he said at a ceremony to announce John Hancock Life Insurance (M) Berhad's sponsorship of the Malaysian contingent to the Olympic Games, here, today.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had told the Sukom KL '98 council meeting two days ago that local governments, national associations, companies and sponsors should not go overboard when showering rewards for success in sports.

Dr Mahathir had said that the practice had unwittingly bred a generation of athletes who placed monetary incentives before pride and honour for the country.

Dr Abdullah, who is also the chef-de-mission to the Olympics, said Malaysia stood a good chance of winning its first gold medal in the Olympics through the doubles combination of Cheah Soon Kit and Yap Kim Hock.

"They are now ranked second in the world and that is good enough for at least a silver. The ranking will spur and motivate the players and the gold is just possible," he said.

He said all the players were hungry for glory and spirited after their first round defeat in the Thomas Cup in Hong Kong and the Olympics gave them the chance to redeem their battered pride.

John Hancock will award a total of RM20,000 to the five most outstanding Malaysian athletes in Atlanta. The selectors will pick one athlete each from badminton, hockey, athletics and swimming and one from either boxing, yachting, canoeing or shooting.

Each of the selected athletes will receive the John Hancock Athlete of the Games Award, a specially designed gold medal and RM3,000 while their respective associations will get RM1,000.

The company will also provide group insurance amounting to RM50,000 to the contingent, consisting of 66 athletes and officials. It includes RM25,000 group life and RM25,000 personal accident coverage. -- BERNAMA

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