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Boxing in Shah Alam, weightlifting at Mines Centre

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THE venue for boxing has been changed to the Shah Alam Indoor Stadium while weightlifting will be held at the Mines Convention Centre in Sungai Besi and those are likely to be the final venue changes for the Commonwealth Games.

There were proposals that badminton, which is scheduled to be held at the Kuala Lumpur BA Stadium in Cheras, be shifted to Stadium Negara, but Sports Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin said the move is not possible.

"We know that badminton will attract big crowds but it is not possible for us to keep changing venues," said Muhyiddin after chairing the second round of the Commonwealth Games executive council meeting in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

Muhyiddin said he had suggested that badminton, where most of Malaysia's medals are expected to come from, be held in Stadium Negara but there are reasons why it cannot be so.

"KLBA Stadium has the best facilities and there is also the parking aspect that we have to look into," said Muhyiddin.

"There is much work taking place at Stadium Negara's surrounding areas and the area may not be conducive for badminton."

KLBA Stadium can only accommodate about 3,000 while Stadium Negara has a capacity of about 12,000.

"What we can do is perhaps have closed-circuit television for those who turn up at KLBA stadium and fail to get tickets but we cannot change venues anymore," he added.

As for the Mines Convention Centre, the new venue for weightlifting, Muhyiddin said all that needs to be checked are the media facilities, dressing rooms and other basic requirements.

As for work at the other venues, Muhyiddin said that except for the main and indoor stadiums, work on the other venues are progressing as scheduled.

"There is a delay of eight to 10 weeks at the main and indoor stadiums. However, we are confident that everything will be ready by December or at the latest, January."

Muhyiddin pointed out that developers United Engineers Malaysia (UEM), when signing the contract, had estimated the stadiums would be ready by next June.

"But as the project is of national interest, they revised the targetted completion date to December," he added.

"Our target was for everything to be ready by the first quarter of next year and I am sure that every venue will be ready to host tournaments from April."

Muhyiddin said the delay is mainly due to technical problems like fixing the roof.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad will visit the National Sports Centre in Bukit Jalil on Aug 23.

As for venues outside Bukit Jalil, Muhyiddin said renovations and upgrading work at the KLBA Stadium and the KL Velodrome in Cheras will commence next month.

"Both should also be ready by April."

Work at venues for netball and lawn bowls are also on schedule.

"The grass for the lawn bowls venue can be planted as the water problem that delayed the planting has been solved."

Upon completion, all the venues will be checked by the technical directors of the respective world governing sports bodies.

Other matters decided:

* THE security and traffic committee will be headed by Inspector General of Police Tan Sri Rahim Noor.

The committee, said Muhyiddin, will take into consideration every aspect to make the Games, in terms of security and transportation, a success.

"The main consideration will be not to have more security personnel than athletes at venues."

* MOST of the 15 sports are planning to host pre-Commonwealth Games tournaments in May.

"The championships will give us a chance to check traffic flow, security, crowd response and various other aspects," said Muhyiddin.

* The executive council have endorsed a proposal from Sukom Ninety Eight that athletes, officials and volunteers be given free transportation during the Games.

"We have agreed as this will enable them to travel and see the sights and visit other venues on non-competition days," said Muhyiddin.

The estimated cost is about RM1.3 million.

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