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Government assumes pivotal role (HL)

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KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - The Government today assumed a more pivotal role in the preparation and organisation of the 1998 Commonwealth Games by placing its entire machinery at the disposal of the organising committee.

Youth and Sports Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin said acting Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim had directed that the government machinery be made available to the Games' organising committee with immediate effect.

"In most instances under the present Games structure, the various Ministries are already involved. They will now mobilise their staff to help in the preparation and organisation of the Games," said Muhyiddin.

He said all the major committees were headed by the secretaries-general of the various Ministries which would now play a pivotal role in providing logistics and manpower for the Games to be held from Sept 11 to 21 next year.

For example, Muhyiddin said, preparations for the opening ceremony would be headed by Chief of Armed Forces Jen Tan Sri Ismail Omar, with all planning and costume preparations to be done by the Ministry of Defence in collaboration with Sukom.

Sukom will provide the finances, while the Armed Forces, the logistics.

Similarly, the other Ministries will mobilise their manpower and even absorb some of the costs in the preparation for the Games.

Speaking after the Commonwealth Games Council meeting chaired by Anwar at the Youth and Sports Ministry in Pusat Bandar Damansara today, Muhyiddin also announced changes to the Games organising structure.

The Games management committee jointly chaired by Sukom Ninety Eight Bhd executive chairman Jen (B) Tan Sri Hashim Mohamed Ali and Olympic Council of Malaysia president Tan Sri Hamzah Abu Samah has been abolished.

In its place, an executive committee has been formed with 15 sub-committees. Previously, the management committee had 12 committees under it.

Muhyiddin said Hamzah would remain a Sukom board member along with vice-presidents Tunku Imran Tuanku Jaafar, Datuk Alex Lee and Dr P.S. Nathan.

Imran is also chairman of the marketing and sports committees.

The Cabinet had last month empowered Muhyiddin to play a bigger role in the organisation of the Games after Sukom was criticised for the lack of publicity.

Piqued by the criticism, Hashim resigned from his post but retracted his resignation the next day after a meeting with Anwar. Two days later, the Cabinet decided on new ground rules, giving Muhyiddin more power which made him the de facto head.

Sukom is now left with raising the funds for the RM310 million Games and organising it.

Hashim said his position under the present format had been enhanced as he would now have direct access and links to the various government departments.

He said Sukom would also be supported by a strong executive committee.

Muhyiddin said the executive committee would meet every month and major decisions that needed the Games council's approval would be brought to the attention of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who is the chairman.

He said the Sukom board would meet every month and report to the

executive committee.

Hashim said the new format meant that the Government had reverted to its previous practice of running the Games, like the 1989 Sea Games.

"The only difference now is that we have Sukom, a private company which will assist in managing the Games. The Government and its machinery will be fully involved now."

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