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Malaysia to stage big event next year, says PM

Randhir Singh

MALAYSIA will stage one of the biggest equestrian events - the International Showjumpers competition - featuring at least 20 of the top 100 riders in the world at Bukit Kiara Equestrian and Country Resort in Kuala Lumpur on Feb 7-8 next year.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday the championship is in recognition of Malaysia's efforts to promote equestrian in the region.

"It is estimated to cost RM2 million and private sponsors will underwrite the cost," said Dr Mahathir.

The Prime Mahathir was speaking at the signing of the RM600,000 Rakan Sukan agreement between Equestrian Association of Malaysia (EAM) and Ibex Corporation Amalgamated Sdn Bhd at the Bukit Kiara Equestrian Club.

Also present was EAM president Tan Sri Musa Hitam, Ibex chairman Datuk Yahya Jalil, National Sports Council director-general Datuk Mazlan Ahmad and EAM deputy president Datuk Wan Adli Wan Ibrahim.

Dr Mahathir said the rapid growth of the sport in Malaysia as seen from the number of clubs affiliated to EAM - from seven to 21 in four years, augurs well for the sport.

"I hope more youngsters will take up the sport and that under the Rakan Sukan programme it (the sport) can reach the youth of the country."

Later, Musa said the international show, sanctioned by the FEI, the world governing body for equestrian, will likely attract at least 20 of the world's best showjumpers.

He said the organisers would also be inviting some of the best Asian showjumpers for the event.

This year's second annual Merdeka carnival will be held at the Selangor Turf Club in Sungai Besi on Sept 4-7. The Regent of Perak Raja Nazrin Shah will be the guest-of-honour.

Musa said Ibex had initially pledged RM500,000 but decided to increase the amount to RM600,000 - RM120,000 over the next five years - under the Rakan Sukan deal.

Apart from preparing Malaysian riders for next year's Asian Games in Bangkok, Musa said EAM will also conduct technical courses to produce more qualified officials.

He added that there was a dire need for more qualified officials with proper knowledge on the sport to assist in officiating and promoting the sport.

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