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Muhyiddin directed to oversee 1998 Games (HL)

Ashraf Abdullah; Randhir Singh

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - The Cabinet today directed Youth and Sports Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin to take on the leading role of ensuring the smooth organisation of the 1998 Commonwealth Games scheduled for Sept 11-21 next year.

Speaking to reporters after his Ministry's post-Cabinet meeting at Pusat Bandar Damansara, Muhyiddin said from now on Sukom Ninety Eight Bhd executive chairman Jen (B) Tan Sri Hashim Mohamed Ali would report directly to him.

"All the 12 Games management committees will also now report directly to me," said Muhyiddin. "The lines of authority have changed. The Cabinet feels that the Minister should have more authority to make decisions," he said.

"There were some anomalies earlier. We learn from mistakes. It was quite workable the last few months, but as the Games get closer we need to have some changes."

He said prior to this, the 12 committees reported to the Games management committee co-chaired by Hashim and Olympic Council of Malaysia president Tan Sri Hamzah Abu Samah.

The committees are protocol, opening and closing ceremonies, communication and broadcasting, culture, finance, Games village and venue beautification, marketing, medical and doping, security and traffic, sports, facilities and transport.

Muhyiddin said the Ministry previously did not have full access to information and decisions made by the Sukom management committee.

"Some of the decisions were not reported to the Ministry or the executive committee but directly to the Games council chaired by the Prime Minister.

"I hope from now on all matters will be referred to the executive committee and its decisions implemented."

Muhyiddin said this, however, did not mean that the Ministry was taking over the organisation of the Games.

"It is to put the Ministry and the Minister in a better position to co-ordinate efforts and make decisions," he said.

Muhyiddin's announcement came a day after Hashim said that there would be "changes in the ground rules".

Hashim, who had announced his decision to quit as Sukom boss on Monday, withdrew his letter after meeting acting Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim yesterday.

Hashim said he had discussed the new ground rules with Anwar.

Muhyiddin said Sukom was still the organiser of the Games and that its structure would remain intact.

Asked if the decision was political, Muhyiddin said: "It is a Government decision." He added Hashim would be informed of the changes soon.

Asked if the Cabinet was happy with Sukom's performance, Muhyiddin said there were some shortcomings which Hashim himself admitted to the Press on Monday.

He said he would be submitting regular reports to the Cabinet under the new format after the committees had submitted their progress reports and financial requirements to the executive committee.

"The executive committee will meet at least once a month and the 12 committees will be told to meet once or twice a month," he said.

He said there would be a special briefing for the acting PM on the Games on a date to be fixed.

Muhyiddin said that the Games secretariat in the Ministry would be strengthened.

The secretariat essentially monitors the construction of new facilities and the upgrading of the existing ones. It also deals with Sukom on matters such as equipment and venues.

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