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OCM: Errant athletes face stiff penalties

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SEA Games athletes and officials caught for indiscipline in Jakarta will be severely punished and they will be asked to repay the expenses incurred in sending them for the Games.

It is costing the Olympic Council of Malaysia (OCM) RM1,800 per person to send the 530 athletes and 230 officials to the Games.

OCM president Tan Sri Hamzah Abu Samah said yesterday it was up to the respective associations to make sure guilty athletes repay the amount spent on them.

He said in the past, OCM had just sent the indisciplined athletes home on the first available flight.

"But that punishment does not appear to be effective as indiscipline keeps on recurring," said Hamzah.

He was, however, quick to add that it was only a suggestion which would be put forward to the Disciplinary Board.

It is standard procedure for the board to meet after the Games to mete out punishment on athletes who run foul of the code of conduct set up by OCM.

This year, chef-de-mission Datuk Megat Junid Megat Ayub will head the board.

"New proposals can be recommended to the board and it is up to them to implement it," he added.

Hamzah was however confident that they will not have to resort to severe punishment.

"Generally, most athletes are well-behaved. Of course there will be one or two black sheep in any contingent. But we can handle the situation when the time comes."

During the 1995 Chiangmai Games two athletes, shot putter Petra Ghani and sprinter Mohamed Sad Arshad were sent home for throwing a rubbish bin down from the second floor of the building they were staying in which nearly hit several Malaysian taekwondo exponents on their way for morning training.

Petra was not allowed to compete in his event while Sad was allowed to run in the 4x100m relay only.

Hurdlers Nur Herman Majid and Hamdi Jafaar were hauled up the MAAU Disciplinary Board for alleged drunken behaviour in Chiangmai.

Two rugby players were also banned for six months by their association for indiscipline at the Games as they had broken camp and stayed out late at night.

The 1995 Games was one of the worse cases of indiscipline among Malaysian contingents for any international event.

Even Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamed had commented after the Games that the lack of discipline was one of the main causes for Malaysia's failure in Chiangmai.

Malaysia garnered 31 gold in Chiangmai, well below their medal target and a far cry from previous Games.

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