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Mahathir-CGF

M'SIA ABLE TO HOST GAMES DESPITE FINANCIAL CRISIS

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 8 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today Malaysia managed to complete its preparations for the Commonwealth Games despite facing financial turmoil.

"Despite losing several hundred billions of US dollar due to the speculations by currency traders and stock market players, we have completed all the facilities and preparations for the Commonwealth Games," he said.

"It is a measure of our commitment to the Games and our seriousness about keeping our promises," he said when opening the Commonwealth Games Federation (CGF) general assembly at the Palace of Golden Horses hotel here.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia was sorry that negative reports about the country and the games still persisted but visitors here would have the opportunity to ascertain for themselves the truth of the situation.

"We hope that the presence of so many people who would otherwise not visit Malaysia will help to correct the image of Malaysia that have been painted by the less friendly of the international media," he said.

Dr Mahathir said although sports today was seriously about winning national pride, he hoped that the old so called "sporting spirit" would still permeate the games.

He said winning was important but the camaraderie and the spirit of friendly competition should still be valued.

"In a world so full of bitterness and conflict we really don't need to bring these into the playing field as well," he said.

He said the Kuala Lumpur 98 Games would leave its mark as the first ever held in Asia, the first to be opened by the Constitutional monarch of a non-British Commonwealth country, the first to feature team sports and the first to receive unprecedented government support at every level.

The Prime Minister said the Kuala Lumpur Games was also the first to use the latest information technology for the games and results management system and also the first to set up a host news agency for the organisation of a sporting event in the history of the Games.

"Kuala Lumpur made its mark as the first Games with 100 per cent turnout, including a new comrade in the Commonwealth Games Association, Kiribati."

He said he was sure that the Malaysian spirit of tolerance and racial harmony would prevail amongst the officials and the athletes of many races and country participating in the Games which was the last to be staged in this millenium.

Also present was CGF President Prince Edward, Commonwealth Secretary-General Chief Emeka Anyaoku and CGF Chairman Michael Fennell, Malaysian Olympic Council Malaysia President Tan Sri Hamzah Abu Samah, and Youth and Sports Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin.

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