

11/08/1998

Big money for Games medal winners

Jugjet Singh

COMMONWEALTH Games gold medallists are about to hit the jackpot now that large corporations are jumping on the bandwagon with monetary incentives.

Sony (M) Sdn Bhd yesterday announced an incentive scheme offering RM10,000 for an individual gold at the Games.

"We believe other corporate bodies will come forward to offer rewards for medal winners at the Games. There are no plans to impose a limit on the purse," said Sports Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin after witnessing an MoU signing between Sony and the National Sports Council (NSC) yesterday.

The MoU was signed by Sony managing director Hideo Kojima and NSC director-general Datuk Mazlan Ahmad.

"We are honoured to provide these incentives as a token of appreciation to the Malaysian athletes. As this is the first time Malaysia will be hosting a sporting event of this magnitude, we encourage all athletes to do their best. We may even consider incentives for the Asian Games in December," said Kojima.

For team events which consist of six or more athletes, a gold medal is worth RM30,000, silver RM15,000 and bronze RM7,000.

For individual efforts, Sony will pay RM5,000 for silver and RM3,000 for bronze.

The NSC incentive scheme is RM80,000 for gold, RM40,000 for silver and RM20,000 for bronze.

"Some quarters have cautioned us not to be too generous but that is the trend right now. If the athletes achieve excellence during the Games and more sponsors come in with money, we will not limit the amount.

"In 1995, when the Jaya '98 project started, we had 5,000 athletes who underwent numerous selections and the final figure today is 237 athletes. It only goes to show how strict the selections have been," said Muhyiddin.

A whopping RM160 million was put aside for the Jaya '98 project and the NSC have spent RM136 million as of July.

"The money has been used to pay foreign coaches, overseas stints, allowances and other benefits to the athletes. We hope they will meet the NSC target of winning seven gold, six silver and 11 bronze medals at the KL Games."

When asked to comment on Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's statement on athletes on Sunday, he said it was timely and appropriate.

(END)