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Helping to spot new sporting talent

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KUALA TERENGGANU, Wed. - The State Government will continue to support training programmes organised by sports associations to spot and develop new talent in various disciplines, Menteri Besar Tan Sri Wan Mokhtar Ahmad said today.

He said sportsmen could help promote the State and the nation.

"We are proud that four Terengganu sportsmen have been selected for the Commonwealth Games."

Two are competing in athletics, one in weightlifting and another in gymnastics.

"As far as beach soccer is concerned, this is the second time the State Government has supported an event organised by the NSTP group," he said while describing it as a new sport which was becoming popular.

Wan Mokhtar was speaking at the launching of the Minda Pelajar Beach Football 98 at Primula Parkroyal beachfront.

Also present were State Small and Medium Industry, Youth, Sports and Special Functions Development committee chairman Othman Daud and New Straits Times Press (Malaysia) Bhd group editor-in-chief Datuk A. Kadir Jasin.

Wan Mokhtar said Terengganu could provide many beach football fields along its coastline but described it as a different ball game, requiring much more stamina and skill compared to conventional football.

"I am not sure if Ronaldo (of Brazil) or Zidane (of France) can play beach football as well as they play conventional football. Our players can be better," he said.

Wan Mokhtar said the Terengganu Swimming Association should organise training programmes to develop swimming talent so that they could one day represent the State and the nation.

He said it was an irony that Terengganu, with more than 270km of beach, 10 major rivers and Tasik Kenyir, a major lake, could not produce a swimmer to represent the nation.

Earlier, Kadir said the NSTP group hoped to inculcate the reading habit among the younger generation, especially those in secondary schools, through its weekly publication of Minda Pelajar.

He said activities which were physical in nature could also assist in enriching the minds.

"Reading is to the mind as exercise is to the body," he said quoting an English proverb. This means that reading and physical activities are equally important in moulding a balanced individual.

"Both are important especially in preparing the younger generation to face the challenges in the next millennium as well as to achieve the national aspiration of becoming a developed nation as envisioned by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad."

Kadir said the NSTP group, through Minda Pelajar, decided to organise the beach football programme which required physical resilience.

He was also confident that through such a programme, beach football would become a popular sport not only among the people in Terengganu but also in the country.

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