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Games-Mahathir (2008 Olympics)

M'SIA STUDYING POSSIBILITY OF HOSTING 2008 OLYMPICS

By: Abdul Muin Abdul Majid

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 12 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Malaysia is studying the possibility of bidding for the 2008 Olympics.

He said although bids had not yet opened, a number of countries had shown strong interest to host the world's biggest Games.

Sydney will organise the 2000 Games while Athens will be hosts in 2004.

"We will study whether we want to be hosts or not," he told reporters after making a special visit to the Commonwealth Games' Corporate Hospitality Village at the National Sports Complex in Bukit Jalil here.

Malaysia is hosting the 16th Commonwealth Games here which will last until Sept. 21.

The Commonwealth Games, being held for the first time in Asia, were opened by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, Tuanku Ja'afar, in a glittering ceremony last night.

Dr Mahathir said to be hosts, having adequate facilities was not enough.

"We need to have a sizeable number of top local athletes to attract strong spectator interest," he said.

Dr Mahathir also commented on the performance of Malaysian cyclist Nor Effandy Rosli, who won the country's first medal in the Games, a silver in the men's 184km individual road race today.

"I am thankful that we won a medal on the first day," he said, adding that the silver medal win by Nor Effandy was unexpected.

"I am confident that it would inspire other Malaysian athletes, especially those who may think that they have no hope. But if they tried hard enough, they might win."

The prime minister said he was satisfied with the performances at the opening ceremony although he was quite worried about its smooth running initially.

Dr Mahathir said he was worried that bad weather may mar the colourful opening.

But it did not rain last night despite the current rainy season when the opening ceremony took place.

Dr Mahathir said many foreign guests, include Commonwealth Games Federation president Prince Edward, had praised Malaysia for the performances at the ceremony.

-- BERNAMA

MAM SHY