

04/05/1998

PM: Make Games the best ever (HL)

Ashraf Abdullah; Chok Suat Ling

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - Addressing 10,000 volunteers of the 16th Commonwealth Games today, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad urged them to demonstrate their patriotism and strive to make it the best ever.

"The success of the Games depends on you. Let's together make it the best Commonwealth Games ever held," the Prime Minister said to cheers and applause from the volunteers who packed the Mines Exhibition Centre in Sri Kembangan.

Dr Mahathir and Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali were earlier given a rousing welcome and a standing ovation when they walked into the hall, accompanied by Youth and Sports Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, Sukom Ninety Eight Bhd chairman Jen (rtd) Tan Sri Hashim Mohamed Ali and chef-de-mission of the Malaysian contingent Datuk Khalid Yunos.

Dr Mahathir said the volunteers had a duty to ensure that not only were the events well organised but also those who visited Malaysia during the Games returned home with fond memories.

He said Malaysia's success in its bid to host the Games, which begins on Sept 11, was itself something to be proud of as the meet was normally held in developed countries.

Therefore, he said, it was important for the volunteers to constantly safeguard the country's image and make the event a success.

Dr Mahathir said the large number of volunteers who had contributed their services to the Games reflected their patriotism and love for the nation.

He hoped that as volunteers they would not object to any task assigned to them even if they were seen as dirty and did not benefit their status.

"In Vancouver, I was told by my wife that the volunteers even clean up horse faeces after a parade," he said, adding that any duty performed by the volunteers was noble.

"We must make sure everything is clean. Even if there are 100,000 spectators at the stadium, we must keep it clean.

"We have to pick up the rubbish, even if we have to use our bare hands. Cleanliness reflects national character."

Dr Mahathir also stressed the importance of maintaining cleanliness of toilets not only at the sports complexes but also in public places.

He also advised the volunteers to be polite even if the visitors were rude.

Dr Mahathir also urged the national athletes to devote their time and energy to training to achieve success at the Games.

He said that as host, Malaysia did not want to be left out in the medal tally.

Although Malaysian athletes were smaller than athletes from other countries, there were many events like weightlifting, badminton, boxing and swimming in which Malaysia had a chance to win medals, he said.

"I appeal to athletes to sacrifice non-beneficial activities and concentrate on training," he said, expressing the "Malaysia Boleh" slogan.

Dr Mahathir said the Government had spent about RM1 billion to build stadiums and sports complexes for the Games.

(END)