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Minister: Dr Mahathir wants a trial run

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THE Sports Ministry will discuss with sports associations the idea by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday to have several sports events held simultaneously at the Bukit Jalil sports complex as a trial run for the Kuala Lumpur Commonwealth Games.

Dr Mahathir had made the suggestion while chairing the Commonwealth Games Council meeting at the Prime Minister's Department in Kuala Lumpur.

Sports Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin said the ideal time for the trial run would be sometime in July and he would discuss it with the associations.

"The field need not be international. Just some sort of a national championships. The LRT (light rail transport to Bukit Jalil) would be operational on July 1 and it would be ideal for a trial run."

Muhyiddin said he would discuss this with the athletics, squash, hockey, gymnastics and swimming associations.

"Dr Mahathir reminded us on the importance of a trial run and wants us to do as many drills as possible before the Games. We will go along with the idea."

He said Sukom Ninety Eight Bhd will partly sponsor the events.

Dr Mahathir had also instructed the Sukom transport committee to negotiate with the Malaysian Airlines and other domestic airlines on special fares for Sabah and Sarawak residents during the Games.

The domestic airlines are Pelangi, SAEGA and Berjaya Air.

"We want to make sure locals too get to see the Games and we will work on providing cheap transport and reasonable accommodation rates."

The transport committee would ensure that all the transport system like the LRT system, the commuter and monorail, would operate according to schedule, besides the usual bus and taxi services.

On the issue of the hotel rates quoted by Sukom's Accommodation Bureau (SAB) which is said to be steep, Muhyiddin said Sukom briefed the Council that the rates will be quoted in ringgit and 'would be reasonable'.

The Malaysian Hoteliers Association and the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Arts will monitor the situation.

The Bureau, managed by Byrom Consultants Ltd, is responsible for arranging rooms for tourism operators, broadcasters, sponsors, Commonwealth Games Federation (CGF) representatives, the media, VIPs, officials as well as athletes.

The meeting, attended by Sukom 98 executive chairman Tan Sri Hashim Ali, also discussed the likely problems to affect the public transport system, following the recent decision of two bus companies to withdraw their participation.

Muhyiddin said Dr Mahathir had also called for a close working relationship between Government agencies, Sukom and sports associations and reminded them about the cost cutting under the nationwide austerity drive.

Muhyiddin said the Ministry will pick a contractor to look after the facilities built for the Games.

"They will be in charge of security, cleanliness and maintenance for a year."

The Economic Planning Unit of the Prime Minister's Department will appoint a permanent professional management team to manage the facilities next year.

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