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Games-Mahathir

POSITIVE FEEDBACK FROM PARTICIPANTS OF KL GAMES

By: E. Sivabalan

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 20 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who has been daily touring various venues of the 16th Commonwealth Games including the Main Press Centre (MPC) here today, has received positive feedback from participants of the Games.

Athletes, officials and the media have given the thumbs up for the smooth running of the Kuala Lumpur Games which kicked off with a glittering opening ceremony on Sept 11. Queen Elizabeth II will officiate at the closing ceremony of the Games here tomorrow.

Disclosing this after a visit to the MPC, which houses more than 1,500 local and foreign journalists, the prime minister said today that he felt that the Games have gone on "very well much better than I expected."

Speaking at a news conference at the MPC located at the Mint Hotel, Dr Mahathir said personally, he was happy with the progress of the second biggest sports event in the world.

"Somebody told me that they regret that the Games is going to be over tomorrow. They thought that it should go on forever. Everybody seems to be enjoying themselves," Dr Mahathir said.

Flanked by Information Minister Datuk Mohamed Rahmat, Bernama acting general manager and editor-in-chief Syed Jamil Jaafar and MPC director Zainoor Sulaiman at the news conference, Dr Mahathir said the Malaysian contingent has done exceptionally well.

Dr Mahathir, who has given strong moral support to Malaysian athletes which consequently resulted in some of them winning gold medals, said he had not expected them to win "that many medals, especially gold."

"I was rather pessimistic. I thought we will have enough problems playing host.

"But as you can see, they have done very well and I am seriously thinking about declaring a public holiday," he said when asked if he would declare a public holiday following the good performance by the Malaysian contingent.

Malaysia, which is currently ranked fourth in the medal tally, has so far won seven gold, nine silver and 10 bronze medals.

The prime minister said if he were to declare a public holiday, it could either be on a Saturday or earlier.

Asked by a foreign journalist to what extent the so-called political problems in the country (apparently referring to the sacking of Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim as Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister) had distracted the Games, Dr Mahathir said it was only a minor distraction.

"I think we are more focused on this Games and we are very happy, we are quite relaxed...the people here don't look as if they have a political problem at all," he said.

Dr Mahathir said somebody had in fact suggested to him that he (Dr Mahathir) should hold the general election now.

"I might win hands down," the prime minister added.

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