

24 FEB 1998  
Commonwealth  
PRE GAMES FROM JULY 11 TO 19

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 24 (Bernama) -- Sukom Ninety Eight Berhad (Sukom) will hold a pre-games for the Commonwealth event from July 11 to 19 at Bukit Jalil sports complex, its executive chairman Tan Sri Hashim Ali said today.

He said local and international meets for athletics, aquatics, squash, men's hockey and gymnastics would be held simultaneously with the participation of some 2,000 athletes.

"We have taken into consideration several international events held during this period. We hope the Youth and Sports Minister will accept this date," he said after meeting the five sports associations involved as well as the Olympic Council of Malaysia (OCM), police, RTM and the Information Ministry.

Hashim said Sukom would mobilise its resources including volunteers, transportation, equipment, technology and ticketing system while a certain number of foreign technical officials would also be invited.

"We will put the whole system to test during the dry run. I want to see high level of stress so we can determine our strength and shortcomings prior to the games proper," he said.

The pre-games, initially planned from July 9 to 12, was proposed by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad. The Commonwealth Games will take place from Sept 11 to 21.

Hashim said every aspect of the games which came under Sukom's responsibility would be put into test including doping tests, security, host broadcasting and if possible, the games village.

He said Sukom and the five sports bodies had agreed to the new date taking into consideration the World Cup soccer final on July 12, the Asian Track and Field (ATF) championship in Fukuoka from July 19 to 22 and the Athletics Grand Prix in Europe.

The Asian Squash Championship would be held as part of the pre-games while the Malaysian Amateur Athletics Union (MAAU) would look into the possibility of changing its pre-games scheduled earlier in May to July, he said.

He said athletics needed three days, squash (eight), aquatics (six), hockey (four) and gymnastics six days for the events to be completed.

"The main stadium may be ready in May but the whole area surrounding it will still be in a mess. The athletics meet will be moved to July subject to the approval of the MAAU president," he said.

Aquatics and gymnastics would organise local meets during the pre-games while hockey could arrange international friendly matches, probably with India or Pakistan, Hashim said.

"The important thing is we don't want the July event to outshine the September games. The other pre-games scheduled in June for aquatic will go on as planned," he said.

He said the schedule of the five sports during the pre-games would be arranged as close as possible to the Commonwealth Games arrangement while the requirement of volunteers would probably be the same as for the games proper.

Hashim said the LRT system would be operational during that period while he would asked the Road Transport Department (RTD) to allow certain bus routes for the pre-games to see the effectiveness of public transportation to the sports complex.

Hashim said client broadcasters could also take the opportunity to test their equipment.

As an incentive to pull in the crowd, Hashim said entry for the pre-games would be free. -- BERNAMA

AR ZUL