

13/08/1998

Put national interest first, athletes urged

Kamarul Yunus

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday urged on all Malaysian athletes and sports officials to put national interest above all other matters, a month before the 16th Commonwealth Games in Kuala Lumpur.

"We may have the edge and probably the chance to win in some of the sports events but this will be meaningless if we have self-interest at heart," he said at the handing over ceremony of the national flag, "Jalur Gemilang", to the Malaysian contingent for the Commonwealth Games.

The 241-strong contingent will participate in 16 events during the 11-day Commonwealth Games which will be held in Kuala Lumpur and Langkawi beginning September 11.

Dr Mahathir, who himself is a keen sportsman, said he wants to see Malaysian athletes excel in major international sports events.

"The success of our athletes in the Commonwealth Games next month will not only be for themselves but also for the country. We should win for Malaysia," he said.

Dr Mahathir urged athletes to train hard and maintain discipline as this would ensure success.

"Apart from the physical aspect, they should also prepare themselves mentally to face and overcome whatever challenges. They must also strictly follow what their coaches teach them.

"These are some of the important factors needed to achieve success," he said, adding that Malaysian athletes and officials should not politicise sports for self-interest.

During competitions, athletes should give their best and not easily give up.

"Although we are physically small, we can still win in certain events. We should not give up easily but try hard and give our best to win.

"It does not matter if we do not win but what is more important is to give it our best. Only then, can we proudly say, 'Malaysia Boleh'," he added.

He hoped that the Commonwealth Games not only inspire Malaysian athletes to prove themselves in sports events but also others to promote Malaysia as a tourist destination.

Dr Mahathir later handed the "Jalur Gemilang" to the chef-de-mission of the Malaysian contingent, Datuk Khalid Yunus, who is the deputy Education Minister.

He also received a mock cheque for RM7,760 as donation from the Malaysian contingent for the special national fund, which was set up to help revive the country's economy.

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