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Games-Athletics

RESPONSE DOES NOT DEPEND ON ONE ATHLETE ALONE, SAYS MUHYIDDIN

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 5 (Bernama) -- The absence of world sprint king Donovan Bailey from Canada at the 16th Commonwealth Games in September does not mean the Games will lose its glitter.

Youth and Sports Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin said today the peoples' interest in witnessing the biggest sports meet ever hosted by Malaysia in September was not dependent on any single athlete.

"Donovan Bailey is not the only sprinter...I understand there are sprinters from other countries who will be competing," Muhyiddin said at a press conference on the 16th Commonwealth Games Bangsar Carnival, here.

According to a Canadian media report, Bailey, who set the new Olympic record of 9.48s at the 1996 Atlanta Olympic had been confirmed by the Canadian Athletics Union president John Tresher as not coming for the Kuala Lumpur '98.

"The response is also not dependent on track events alone...World class athletes are also competing in other events such as swimming," Muhyiddin added.

Another Canadian sprinter, Bruny Surin, who won the world 60m race (indoor) twice, is also not on the list for the Commonwealth Games released by the Canadian Athletics Union on Monday.

Despite the absence of the two sprinters, the 100m event should promise an interesting race from Frankie Fredericks from Namibia who won the bronze medal at the Commonwealth Games in Victoria, Canada four years ago.

Ato Boldon, the 200m world champion from Trinidad and Tobago, who originally declined to participate in the Kuala Lumpur '98, may also change his mind and compete in the 100m in September if he can come up with a good time for the 100m at the Stockholm Grand Prix, in Sweden beginning today.

According to Muhyiddin, detailed information on each individual who will be competing from each participating nation could be obtained from organisers Sukom Ninety Eight Berhad (Sukom) after Aug 11.

Earlier, he told reporters that the Bangsar Carnival on Aug 15 was one of the highlights of the Commonwealth Games Publicity Campaign by the Youth and Sports Ministry.

The Carnival would be officiated by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamed and Datin Seri Dr. Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali at 9pm.

Its main objective is to provide information on the Commonwealth Games, boost ticket sales and promote Bangsar as a tour destination during and after the games.

Meanwhile, Muhyiddin said the tickets for the opening and closing ceremonies for the games were almost sold out and the response for the two events had been overwhelming.

"As of Aug 1, 222,300 of the 1.28 million tickets printed had been sold...Most of the tickets sold were for events which had small seating capacity," he added.

He cited swimming, lawn bowls, badminton, bowling, cricket and rugby as the events contributing to the sale of tickets.

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