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RM100m gamble

Randhir Singh

IT will cost a whopping RM100mil to bid for the 2008 Olympics and there is no guarantee Malaysia will get the Games.

Olympic Council of Malaysia secretary Sieh Kok Chi said in Kuala Lumpur yesterday the cost was an estimate based on an International Olympic Committee (IOC) marketing study which provided figures of similar bids by some cities in the past.

"RM100mil was the amount that Cape Town spent when it made a bid for the 2004 Olympics," said Sieh when asked to comment on Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's remarks that Malaysia may consider bidding for the 2008 Olympics.

Sieh said there are several conditions that must be met by the bidding city rather than just having first class facilities.

He said factors which influence the IOC decision ranged from political, economic and social.

"Malaysia will have to open their borders to the world and allow itself to be scrutinised. They (IOC), including the media, will go through everything with a fine tooth comb. They will check our human right record, stability and a whole host of issues."

Sieh said it was because of such scrutiny that Beijing lost twice in their attempt to become Olympic hosts. Beijing lost to Sydney for the 200 Games and Athens for the 2004 Games.

"Personally, I think the time may not be right. We should concentrate on bidding for the Asian Games in 2006."

He said Toronto, Istanbul, Paris, Cape Town and Buenos Aires are among the cities who have expressed interest in bidding for the 2008 Olympics.

This would be Istanbul's third attempt. All these cities also made bids but failed to win the 2004 Games.

Sieh said another factor that might work against Malaysia would be the fact that Africa and South America have yet to host the Olympics.

He said Malaysia should take IOC president Juan Antonio Samaranch's hint that Malaysia should instead go for the 2006 Asian Games.

"Samaranch dropped the hint when he said while Malaysia can host the Olympics, they should try the Asian Games first."

Malaysia will make a bid for the 2006 Asian Games in 1999. The host city will only be decided in 2000.

Sieh said Syria, Qatar and India are also bidding for the Asian Games.

The 2002 Asian Games are to be held in Pusan. However, due to the World Cup football finals to be held the same year, Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) have brought forward the Games to 2001.

This is the second time that South Korea will be hosting the Asian Games.

The first was in Seoul in 1986.

Sieh said it cost Malaysia close to RM5mil when it made a bid for the Commonwealth Games in 1992.

"For the Asian Games, it should not be any higher. It all depends on how we want to go about doing it."

Malaysia have already started laying the groundwork. It hosted the IOC Forum during the Commonwealth Games which 16 Asian countries attended. The forum participants also took the opportunity to witness the Games and inspect the facilities.

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