

12 AUG 1998

Mahathir-Commonwealth

VICTORY IS FOR MALAYSIA NOT INDIVIDUALS, SAYS MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 12 (Bernama) -- The victory of the national athletes in the 16th Commonwealth Games is for Malaysia, not individuals or certain races, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

He said whoever won a medal in the Games meant a victory for Malaysia since the athlete belonged to Malaysia.

"We should give priority to the country, irrespective of race. What we want is victory for the country," he said when addressing the Malaysian contingent at Stadium Putra, National Sports Complex at Bukit Jalil, here. Kuala Lumpur will host the Games from Sept 11 to 21.

He said those competing would not be this community or that community and the winners on the other hand would be Malaysians.

Citing an example, Dr Mahathir said people in countries like the United States, Canada and Britain greeted athletes who won the track event and they were usually blacks.

"The supporters don't care about the colour of the skin, white, black, yellow or brown," he said.

Dr Mahathir also said the national athletes must continue their training and follow all instructions given by their coaches.

Apart from the physical aspect, he said Malaysian athletes must be mentally and spiritually prepared for the Games as this would determine their success.

He said Malaysia might not be able to win many events but it had highly capable athletes in certain events.

Dr Mahathir also said sports should not be mixed with politics to ensure victory for Malaysia and the Commonwealth Games as success.

He hoped there would be no more athletes pulling out of the competition due to self interest or asking for special treatment.

Dr Mahathir also reminded Malaysian athletes of the need to keep the good name of the country.

"Winning or not doesn't matter but we must make an effort. We must use our energy to the maximum to achieve victory and only then can we say 'Malaysia Boleh'," he said.

During the function, the Prime Minister presented the national colours "Jalur Gemilang" to national contingent chief Datuk Khalid Yunus.

Also present were his wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali and Youth and Sports Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin.

-- BERNAMA

MAM ABG