

04 SEP 1999

Muhyiddin-Alexander

GOVERNMENT HOPES PETRONAS WILL ROPE ALEX INTO F1 TEAM

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 4 (Bernama) -- The government will ask Petronas to rope Malaysia's Formula One aspirant Alexander Yoong into the Red Bull Sauber Petronas Formula One team.

Youth and Sports Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin said today he spoke to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on the matter about three weeks ago.

"Our request has been made through the prime minister and we hope Petronas will consider it," he told reporters after the launch of the Sports For All Carnival (Kesuma) by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi at the National Sports Complex, here.

Muhyiddin said that as there was a possibility of a revamp in the Red Bull Sauber Petronas' list of drivers, Petronas, which is one of the team's sponsors, could consider giving Alexander the breakthrough into the Formula One race.

"Maybe the time is not right now but in two years, Alexander should be ready," he said.

Muhyiddin said it would cost about RM14 million to enable Alexander, who is now involved in the F3000 championship in Europe, to prepare and compete in various competitions to achieve his target of Formula One race in 2001.

"It's a big sum and only through big sponsors like Petronas can he achieve this," he said.

In April this year, the government gave Alexander RM150,000 as a token sum and is now assisting him to find other sponsors.

On press reports today that there was indiscipline among shuttlers at the Badminton Academy's hostel and that national coach Chen Changjie had quit, Muhyiddin said the Badminton Association of Malaysia (BAM) should investigate and resolve the matter.

"I don't want to comment...let BAM investigate and take action as this is an internal matter," he said.

It was reported that players had been gambling at the hostel every night while some players were bringing women to their rooms.

Muhyiddin said what was more important now was for the BAM, coaches and players to prepare for two major assignments next year -- the Thomas and Uber Cups and the Olympic Games.

The minister said he met BAM president Datuk Dr Abdullah Fadzil Che Wan, secretary Datuk Mohammed Al-Amin Majid and National Sports Council (NSC) Director-General Datuk Mazlan Ahmad yesterday to discuss Malaysia's preparations for the two events.

"These are the two important tournaments and we expect to do well. BAM and NSC will launch a special programme soon as part of the preparation for the events," he said.

Muhyiddin also said that he had endorsed BAM's move to hire former South Korean doubles ace Park Joo Bong as coach and an agreement was expected to be signed next month.

-- BERNAMA

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