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Nicol the biggest cash recipient

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THE national monetary reward scheme for national athletes who do well in international tournaments will be reviewed this year.

Sports Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin speaking at a Press conference at Bukit Jalil during the rewards ceremony for athletes who won gold at the Brunei Sea Games and other major events, said the time has come to review the scheme in order to help national athletes achieve better results.

"It is clear that such a scheme (the monetary rewards) from the government has helped our athletes achieve better results in recent international competitions and also at the Asian Games, Commonwealth Games and the Olympics," said Muhyiddin.

"The rewards in the new scheme could be increased but the final decision will only be made after a meeting at the end of this month."

At the moment, a gold medal won in the Sea Games series is worth RM5,000 to the winner.

For the Olympics and World Championships, gold is worth RM160,000, the silver RM80,000 and bronze RM40,000.

For the Commonwealth Games and Asian Games, gold comes with a RM80,000 reward, silver is RM40,000 while bronze is RM20,000. For the Junior World Championships, the reward for gold is RM40,000, silver is RM20,000 and bronze RM10,000.

"Since this scheme was introduced at the 1989 Sea Games, there has been several changes. We have to keep up with the changing times," said Muhyiddin.

At the ceremony yesterday, squash star Nicol David was the big winner collecting RM6,250 for winning the Sea Games singles and team golds, and another RM42,500 for winning the World junior singles title and team bronze.

For the Sea Games athletes alone, a total of RM402,496 were handed out as rewards.

Muhyiddin also said that the Sports Ministry are also planning to go big in hang gliding, a fast growing sport in Europe.

For a start, the World Invitation Kinabalu Hang Gliding Challenge '99 will be held at the Mount Kinabalu Kundasang Golf Club in Ranau on Sept 18.

"We have received confirmation from top gliders from the United States, Australia, Ukraine, United Kingdom, Italy, Germany and France," said Muhyiddin.

He added the proposal to hold the event was mooted by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad who will officiate the event.

Besides promoting Malaysia as a destination for hang gliding, the championship would also be the first step in Malaysia's efforts to host the World Championships in 2003.