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No pullout and that's good news for Aziz

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NONE of the players confirmed in the 32-nation World Cup of Golf at Mines Resort City on Nov 18-21 have withdrawn so far - and that's good news for tournament organising chairman Tan Sri Aziz Ismail.

Aziz said in Kuala Lumpur yesterday the only uncertainty is the names of the two golfers from Australia.

"They have confirmed participation but yet to name their team," said Aziz. "We are not sure who they will be fielding."

Aziz was asked to comment on the withdrawal of O'Meara, winner of the 1997 US Masters and British Open, from the US\$5mil American Express championship to be held in Spain on Nov 4-7.

The third event in the new so-called 'world golf championship' launched this year, the AmEx championship is expected to attract the cream of world golf.

O'Meara, who missed the cut at the National Car Rental Classic at Disney World last week, cited poor form as a reason for his pullout.

"I am not hitting it good," he was quoted as saying.

However, O'Meara was non-committal on his schedule for the rest of the year, which includes the Visa Taiheiyo Masters in Japan, the World Cup in Kuala Lumpur and the US Skins Game.

Aziz said everything is going smoothly and a permanent secretariat will be set up at the Mines Resort City this week.

"I'll be moving in permanently. I'll spend more time overseeing the preparation," said Aziz, who is the private secretary to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Aziz said major corporations have begun buying tickets in bulk for their corporate clients.

"Since we announced that 2,000 additional tickets will be available, there has been an increase in orders."

David Ciclitira, executive chairman of CNBC sports, paid tribute to Aziz as the prime force behind the organisation of the World Cup.

"A tournament of such magnitude will always require a strong personality. Bureaucracy, sponsors' needs etc ... Aziz is the man who makes things happen," said Ciclitira.

Aziz, who is also president of Glenmarie Golf and Country Club, is an 11-handicapper and has been the 'father figure' to all involved in the staging of the 1999 World Cup.

"He is the guide and provide leadership to us," said V. Kanesan of DRB-Hicom Group. "As sponsors, we feel comfortable with him around as he knows our needs."

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