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PM: We have an equal chance for 2008

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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad reaffirmed Kuala Lumpur's bid to host the 2008 Olympic Games and said that because of their good record in hosting international tournaments they stand a good chance of winning the bid.

No city have hosted the Games in their first bid, but Dr Mahathir said that because of the new procedures set by the International Olympic Committee (IOC), all bidding cities stand an equal and fair chance.

KL, who put on a splendid show at the 1998 Commonwealth Games, is facing stiff challenges from London, Buenos Aires, Paris, Istanbul, Beijing, Bangkok and Osaka.

Dr Mahathir said that although history may not be on Malaysia's side, they cannot be ruled out of the race for the 2008 Games.

"The new bidding process which was announced by IOC recently gives a better chance to all interested cities," said Dr Mahathir yesterday, after the flag-handing ceremony to Team Proton-Pert for next week's Rally of Indonesia at his office in Putra Jaya.

"I'm sure we stand a good chance of hosting the 2008 Games because of our capability and the good packages we can come up together with the excellent record in the sporting section.

"On top of that, our facilities have been recognised to be among the best in the world many times over."

Dr Mahathir added that by chance if they are not successful, Malaysia will continue bidding to host the Olympic Games.

He said that ultimately Malaysia must one day host the Games and they will keep coming up with a good package to win the votes and host the Games.

"The fact that we are interested in hosting the Games will only do our image good," he said.

"We have a splendid record in hosting international events and one day we will get the right to host the best sporting event in the world."

Dr Mahathir said he realised that the other cities bidding for the Games are also going big in the promotions to impress the IOC.

For instance, Osaka have announced a US\$250 million (RM950 million) budget for the promotional campaign alone.

Istanbul are also going all out in their attempt. The Turkish Government having pushed through a Bill in Parliament to allow them to continue bidding for the Games until they are successful.

Beijing, who have failed on two previous occasions, are also going big.

"We may not be able to match the others in our budget for promotional campaigns but I still have the confidence that KL can impress many with our infrastructure, facilities and efficiency in handling the job," he said.

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