

04 JUNE 2000

Mahathir-Sukma

SPORTS CAN HELP BOOST COMPETITIVE SPIRIT, SAYS MAHATHIR

NIBONG TEBAL, June 3 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad tonight advised Malaysians to take up sports to boost their spirit to compete with other countries.

The Prime Minister said the country had proven that it could succeed in whatever feat it undertook in line with the "Malaysia Boleh" spirit.

"Believe me, if we put our hearts and souls in what we do repeatedly, inevitably we will become more efficient," he said when officiating the closing of the Eighth Malaysia Games (Sukma) at the Batu Kawan State Stadium near here.

He said they would become stronger and be capable as other people in the world.

Even now, the new generation of Malaysians were taller than their parents and it was not difficult to find those almost two metres tall, he said.

Mahathir said sports could also unite the various races in the country.

"When taking part in sports, they can mix and compete with one another...we don't feel isolated from other races," he said.

"I believe that with progress in sports, there will be progress in establishing a single Malaysian race."

He said this would ensure that Malaysia would be free, independent and sovereign.

Malaysians would then be able on their own to defend other areas such as defence, economy and ideology, he said.

Mahathir said that through sports also the world would recognise Malaysia as a free and sovereign country.

He said Malaysia was also aiming to host the Olympic and in this respect, Malaysian athletes need to train themselves to achieve world standard.

Judging at the 60 new records created in the games, Mahathir said he was confident that the country's athletes could one day compete with the big names in the world sports.

Speaking to reporters later, he thanked Penang for organising a successful Sukma.

The success was due to the support of the people who showed that they were also interested in sports, he said.

Dr Mahathir and his wife, Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali, arrived at the stadium at 9.30pm accompanied by Penang Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon and his wife, Puan Sri Chui Kah Peng.

People have been filling up the stadium since 4pm and by night the stadium was packed with some 40,000 people.

The 10-day games was participated by 6,572 athletes and coaches from 19 contingents, including the 105-strong Brunei team.

Dr Mahathir presented the Prime Minister's Cup to overall champions Selangor.

Also present were Youth and Sports Minister Datuk Hishamuddin Hussein and Sabah Chief Minister Datuk Osu Sukam.

Sabah will host the next Sukma in 2002.

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