

25/08/2000

SRAM still banking on Pusan golds

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SQUASH is certain to be excluded from the 2002 Asian Games in Pusan, South Korea but the SRA of Malaysia are not giving up hope.

Malaysia could miss out on a possible two-gold haul if squash is omitted as Asian champions Ong Beng Hee and Nicol David would have started as favourites.

SRAM executive director Kol (Rtd) Wong Ah Jit said Asian Squash Federation (ASF) president Mokhzani Mahathir had written to Olympic Council of Asia president Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahad to enlist his support for the sport.

The letter was handed to Sports Minister Datuk Hishammuddin Hussein, who was in the Middle East last month to lobby for support for Kuala Lumpur's bid to host the 2006 Asian Games.

It is learnt that Sheikh Ahmad is in favour of squash being included in the Pusan Games but much will depend on the South Korean Olympic Council, who will have some say as hosts.

So far, more than 11 nations - Malaysia, Pakistan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Thailand, India, Sri Lanka, Japan, Kuwait, Jordan and Macau - have given the nod while several other countries are expected to join the list.

Mokhzani will meet with the Korean Olympic Committee in Seoul on Sept 27.

The Korean SRA will also be organising the Korean Squash Open on Aug 27-29 in a bid to convince their Olympic council while the top Asian squash nations would be sending their top players.

However, Malaysia will only be sending Yap Kok Four and Aaron Soyza for the men's event while Sharon Wee and Tricia Chuah will compete in the women's.

Ong will not be available as he will be competing in the Hong Kong Open which clashes with the Korean Open.

Kenneth Low is out with an ankle injury while Nicol has opted out to concentrate on her SPM examinations.

"It is time for us to show our support for the tournament and hopefully, the organisers of the Asian Games will be impressed. It will be a big loss for Malaysia as we will definitely lose out on medals."

Squash made its debut at the Bangkok Asian Games two years ago, where Nicol won the individual gold while Low landed the bronze.

Besides, the individual golds from Ong and Nicol, Malaysia could also clinch the men's and women's team golds if the Koreans change their minds and include squash at the Asian Games.

(END)