

PM: Aim for the gold

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Dr Mahathir reminds national athletes of their responsibility

By Vijesh Rai
rai@nstp.com.my

PRIME MINISTER Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday told the 558 national athletes for the Sea Games to think of winning and stop complaining.

While Dr Mahathir is confident that with home ground advantage, Malaysia will do well, he expects the national athletes to be focussed on their events and not let anything distract them.

Saying anything other than winning was irrelevant at this time, Dr Mahathir hoped the athletes understand the responsibility they shoulder in the KL Games which start on Saturday.

"Now is not the time to complain that the food is not delicious or that you have to get up early. This is not the time to be sensitive.

"What is important now is to win and everything else is irrelevant," said Dr Mahathir told the contingent before handing the "*Jalur Gemilang*" to Chef-de-Mission Datuk Mazlan Ahmad in Putrajaya yesterday.

Present were Olympic Council of Malaysia (OCM) president Tunku Imran Tuanku Ja'afar and Sports Minister Datuk Hishammuddin Tun Hussein. Athletes and officials from sports that will be contested in the Klang Valley were also present.

Dr Mahathir also asked the athletes not give in to disappointments or to give up.

"If you do, then it will affect your performances and this mustn't happen. Forget anything wrong that the coaches, officials or Government might have done. Don't let this affect your concentration."

As he spoke, there was pin drop silence — an indication perhaps of the contingent's concentration on the Prime Minister's call for winning.

Dr Mahathir said the aim is for Malaysia to be famous in certain events and he is confident that there are sports where Malaysians can excel in.

"I know that there are certain sports where we face physical limitations but, even if we cannot be champions, we must try not to be left too far behind. With determination, we can do it."

That, however, will depend on the athletes.

"While I am confident that as hosts, our chances are better as the public will be with you. Even then, it is the conduct of the athletes that is also very important.

"I hope the athletes understand the responsibility they bear as they will be representing Malaysia.

Dr Mahathir said national athletes had proven in the 1998 Kuala Lumpur Commonwealth Games and the 1999 Brunei Sea Games that they could deliver good results and this is what he wants this time around.

Malaysia won 10 gold in the Commonwealth Games and 57 in Brunei, the best ever achievement abroad.

For the Sea Games, Malaysia have targetted 80 gold medals which, if achieved, will surpass the previous best of 67 which was the haul from the 1989 Kuala Lumpur Games.

"I am confident that we can in the spirit of "*Malaysia Boleh*" but the athletes must remember that they are Malaysian athletes and be responsible for that."

The message couldn't be any clearer and the long queue to shake hands with the Prime Minister after the ceremony was indication that the message had sunk home.