

15/09/2001

73 and almost there

n; Farrah Naz Karim

AS the 80-gold target set by the National Sports Council is as good as secured, and the previous best of 67 in 1989 already beaten, Malaysia's sights should now be trained on conquering the KL Games.

They ought to go for the overall title, the best in South East Asia, and they will not get a better chance to do that, than right now in their own backyard, and with the Malaysian spirit raging like a forest fire.

What more when the Indonesians aren't at their best now.

While the bearish stock market continued to slide, Malaysia's investments in the Gemilang 2001 project is paying dividends, with our gold closing at 73 today.

The bullish charge by our athletes since venues opened for action since last Saturday, has given Malaysians renewed faith and the confidence to dream for South East Asian supremacy.

With this Games being more competitive than the previous ones, it will take anything from 95 to 100 to land the overall title.

Chef de Mission Datuk Mazlan Ahmad, has targetted seven for today, and 18 for the final day of competition tomorrow.

Mathematically, that works out to 97 gold medals, and ideally, a great chance for regional supremacy.

"I won't say anything about becoming overall champions before we get 82 gold medals," said Mazlan who is also NSC director general.

"But we have a good chance based on our expectations in the next two days. We are hoping to get seven gold tomorrow and hopefully 18 more on Sunday."

But there is that intimidating threat from Thailand who could come in very strongly from the blind side tomorrow to take over the reins when their boxers step into the ring for all the 11 finals at the Dewan Centre Court in Paroi, in Negeri Sembilan.

That is, if their track and field athletes don't do that first today.

But even that happens, at least one man will not be disappointed - Datuk Hishammuddin Hussein.

"Project Gemilang 2001 ends after the Games but the PM (Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad) has told me to start preparing the Malaysian contingent for the Asian Games in South Korea and Commonwealth Games in England next year," said Hishammuddin.

Yesterday, Malaysia's nine gold medals came from athletics, diving, equestrian, gymnastics, silat and netball.

Mazlan's daily target yesterday was five.