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Aidid dismisses talk of 'the great divide'

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MALAYSIAN AAU president Datuk Syed Aidid Murtaza has dismissed allegations that there is a rift between the coaches and the team management of the national contingent preparing for the Sea Games which begins today.

If anything, the team is ready to deliver the expectations of the nation and the 16-gold medal target still remains as the athletes are eager to help the country surpass the 80-gold medal target.

And Aidid believes that the athletes will achieve what they set out to do.

"The preparations are over and the squad is ready to challenge the region's best. And we expect the athletes to do well in the Games," said Aidid after meeting with the national athletes and coaches at the team hotel yesterday.

"Everybody - who needed to be consulted were consulted and the athletes are highly motivated and well prepared, physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually."

However, Aidid did not discount the possibility that some of the coaches or officials were slighted by the decisions made as it is impossible to please everybody.

"Just like how our fingers are not the same, it is the same with human beings. As such, there are bound to be people who will not be happy with some of the decisions made."

"But I would like to remind the athletes and the coaches to heed our Prime Minister's call to set aside all minor grievances and concentrate on the task at hand. And that is to deliver in the Games."

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on Tuesday, had called on the athletes and officials not to be overly sensitive and complain about minor problems but instead focus their efforts in winning medals in the Games.

And Aidid believes that the same sentiment and commitment should be applied by athletics squad in their bid to win the targetted gold medals.

The national body has been under heavy criticism for their decision to stick with their 16-gold medal projection, a target which many in the sporting circle belief is unattainable.

But Aidid refused to be cowed into reviewing the target.

"There is no change in the medal tally. It is still 16 and we will give the athletes all the moral and spiritual assistance," said Aidid.

And to spur the athletes, Aidid also announced that cash incentives will be given to the medal winners, irrespective of the colour.

"Incentives will be given to every athlete who wins a gold, silver or bronze medal. However, the incentive will not be higher than what NSC (National Sports Council) have in place at the moment," said Aidid.

The NSC's scheme, however, is limited to gold medal winners only.

And now that MAAU have settled their differences, at least as far as Aidid is concerned, it is time for the athletes and coaches to turn their focus and commitment to delivering the medals.