

29 JULY 2001

Sports-Equestrian (Mahathir)

EQUESTRIAN ENDURANCE TRACK TO BE BUILT

KUALA LUMPUR, July 29 (Bernama) -- Malaysia will build a track for the equestrian endurance event so that it can hold world-class competitions for this category of the sport.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Malaysia had world-class riders and it was only proper that the track be built.

The sport was also getting more popular in the country, Dr Mahathir told reporters after watching the showjumping event at the TNB Equestrian International 2001 at the Selangor Polo and Riding Club here today.

Malaysia's Datuk Kamaruddin Abdul Ghani won the 160km endurance event at a championship in Melbourne, Australia, last year.

"We will build the track. There is a proposal by Tenaga Nasional that the track be built under transmission power cables," he said.

The Prime Minister said another polo club would also be set up soon, and with this the number of polo teams would increase.

He is confident that Malaysians can excel in equestrian if they are given proper training.

He said Malaysia had gained international recognition in the sport as many foreign riders, including from Europe, had come for the TNB Equestrian International 2001 championship. The competition features the dressage and showjumping events.

Dr Mahathir said more competitions would be held to promote the sport.

Asked on Malaysia's chances in the Kuala Lumpur SEA Games equestrian events, Dr Mahathir hoped that they would do well in the games in September.

The Prime Minister gave away prizes for the showjumping event, in which Qabil Ambak of Malaysia finished first in 34.08s, Nina Melkonian of Germany was second in 34.49s and Thailand's Cholada Weber third in 37.50s.

TNB chairman Datuk Dr Jamaludin Jarjis told reporters that TNB was discussing with the Police Equestrian Club to identify the site for the proposed endurance track.

He said the track could stretch up to 100km according to international standards.

"We want to do it this year; the starting point is being identified but it will end in Putrajaya," he said.

He said TNB was undertaking this project as a social responsibility to help develop equestrian.

He said TNB would also set up an equestrian club in Bangi soon, which will be open to TNB staff and their families for a small fee.

-- BERNAMA

AZ DC YBY