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Sports-Squash (Open)

MEN'S OPEN IS ON, WOMEN'S OPEN CANCELLED

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 30 (Bernama) -- The Malaysian Men's Open squash championship, which was earlier postponed until next year, will be held after all while the Women's Open has to be cancelled.

Squash Rackets Association of Malaysia (SRAM) executive director Lt Kol (Rtd) Wong Ah Jit said the association was trying hard to find sponsors for the event, scheduled for Dec 9 to 15.

"Our 2006 Project chairman Datuk Mokhzani Mahathir is trying very hard to find sponsors to organise the Malaysian Men's Open this year. We will have the final details on Friday," he said when met, here today.

Wong said about RM120,000 were needed to run the event, which would attract several world top players including Malaysia's best and world number 10, Ong Beng Hee.

"Beng Hee is going to defend his title. We also have not seen him in action for almost a year at home and this will be a great opportunity for the local fans to support him," he said.

Wong said if everything went well, the early rounds would be held at the National Sports Council's (NSC) Squash Centre in Jalan Duta while from the quarterfinals onwards, the matches would be held at the National Squash Centre in Bukit Jalil.

"This will be a big tournament for us. We think that a switch to Bukit Jalil will give the fans better viewing and comfortable environment when watching the stars in action," he added.

Last December, Beng Hee became the first ever Malaysian to win the Malaysian Men's Open after beating John Williams of Australia in the final.

Early this month, SRAM said that the tournament might be postponed until next year due to the economic situation as well as the American bombing attacks in Afghanistan.

In the meantime, the Women's Open had to be called off as Malaysian top player Nicol David would not be competing as she would be away in Amsterdam for a training stint.

"If our top player cannot take part, why should we organise the tournament. Furthermore, the Men's Open will be more attractive to the fans," he added.

The Women's Open was earlier scheduled for Nov 29 to Dec 2.

-- BERNAMA

HRS AHH AO