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Sports-SEA (Invitation)

THAILAND RECEIVES SEA GAMES' INVITE

By: Rozaini Ahmad

BANGKOK, Aug 18 (Bernama) -- The invitation to the 21st SEA Games in Kuala Lumpur was officially presented to the Thai government by a special representative from the Malaysian Youth and Sports Ministry here today.

Youth and Sports Development Deputy Director Nawawi Arshad handed over the invitation to the Olympic Council of Thailand president General Yuthasaka Sasipratha.

In his speech, Nawawi said the 17-day expedition to five Asean nations north of Malaysia was most challenging to the participants as they had to brave heavy rain, storm and high mountains.

However this was an invaluable experience as it demanded very high mental and physical endurance from the participants who one day would inherit the nation's leadership, he said.

Yuthasaka, in his speech, said it was his hope that next month's SEA Games would become an exciting and colourful sports carnival apart from enhancing the close relations already in existence among the Asean neighbours.

He said winning medals was of secondary importance as the firm ties among the Asean nations can be further cemented through the biennial Games.

Thailand is the last Asean nation to receive the official invitation for the 21st SEA Games through the Asean Goodwill Flight Expedition 2001.

Leader of the expedition, Abdul Latiff Endot said the 9M-ERA experimental aircraft he piloted from Phnom Penh to Bangkok yesterday almost ran out of fuel with 20 nautical miles left before landing.

"The (plane's) exhaust had some damage and this caused the fuel to run dry fast," he said.

He said the plane had only some three minutes supply of fuel left but the aircraft and another plane piloted by Mohd Khairul Kamaruddin managed to land safely at the Royal Thai Air Force base here.

Both aircrafts will leave for home on Monday and they are expected to land at the Royal Malaysia Air Force (RMAF) base in Subang on Wednesday.

Abdul Latiff said the Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad was expected to welcome the two aircrafts and participants of the expedition that had toured nine other Asean nations since last month.

The Asean Goodwill Flight Expedition 2001 which involved two Rakan Muda Zodiac experimental aircraft had flown over almost 8,000 nautical miles to extend the SEA Games invitation to the other nine Asean nations.

The goodwill expedition was launched by Dr Mahathir last July 14.

-- BERNAMA

JAI AKT ZUL