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Sports-Football (Asiad)
SEND MALAYSIAN FOOTBALL TO BUSAN, SAYS AFC

KUALA LUMPUR, July 26 (Bernama) -- The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) has strongly recommended to the Olympic Council of Malaysia (OCM) to include a football team for the Busan Asian Games.

AFC general secretary Datuk Peter Velappan reiterated the need for national olympic committees to be sensitive to the development efforts at both the national and continental levels.

"There has been concern expressed by no less than the Prime Minister Datuk Seri Mahathir Mohamad on the poor state of Malaysian football.

"The AFC is of the opinion that by allowing the Malaysian team to participate in what is an under-23 football tournament at the Asian Games, we will be able to effectively gauge and assist in any progress," he said in a statement here today.

Velappan said it was surprising that while the Olympic Council of Asia had embraced the efforts to promote and develop football on the continent, there were some national olympic committees who did not share this vision of greater glory for national and Asian football.

"The AFC is now focusing on the accelerated development of Asian football. Events like the Asian Games and other regional tournaments will play a major role in this accelerated development focus.

"For this reason, I would like to urge the OCM to fully support the participation of the Malaysian national Under-23 side in the Busan Asian Games," said Velappan.

Velappan sent a letter addressed to OCM secretary Datuk Sieh Kok Chi today with the hope that the national sports body would include football for the Asian Games, to be held from Sept 29 to Oct 14.

Malaysia have been drawn with the hosts South Korea, Oman and the Maldives in Group A. There will be 24 teams competing for the one gold medal at stake.

As per the regulations, any withdrawal of Malaysia from the tournament at this time will invite a sanction and fine from the Busan Asian Games Organising Committee.

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