

**27 Million Malaysians Supporting Country's Athletes At Olympics, Paralympics – PM
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PUTRAJAYA, July 11 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said the national athletes competing in the Olympics and Paralympics in London at the end of the month will receive the support and prayers of 27 million Malaysians.

He said although the support was not physical but more spiritual in nature, their success at both the international championships would boost optimism not only among the Malaysian athletes but also the people in general.

"Whenever the Malaysian athletes step into the arena, they know that all Malaysians are behind them," he said when delivering his message to the national contingent to the Olympic Games in London from July 27 to Aug 12 and the Paralympic Games also at the same venue from Aug 29 to Sept 9.

Also present at the ceremony held at the Prime Minister's office were Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, members of the cabinet and Chief Secretary to the Government Datuk Seri Dr Ali Hamsa.

Najib said sports was an important element in the national agenda and the government had never ignored sports especially in the efforts towards nation building.

"Success in the sporting field is not assessed in terms of the per capita income alone but also in terms of the people's feelings," he said.

Success in sports went beyond the number of gold medals won because the success was also synonymous with Malaysia's success. The success could also generate optimism on Malaysia's performance and also its future, he added.

The Prime Minister said the government appreciated the sacrifices of the athletes by giving cash incentives through the Sports Incentive Scheme (Shakam).

The winner of an Olympic gold medal will receive RM1 million, silver (RM300,000) and bronze (RM100,000). They will also be given a life-long pension of RM5,000, silver (RM3,000) and bronze (RM2,000).

The gold medal winner for the Paralympics will receive an incentive of RM300,000, silver (RM200,000) and bronze (RM100,000).

Najib said the government also gave recognition to the national athletes by conferring them national and state awards.

"Among the recipients were Tan Sri Dr M. Jegathesan (athletics), Tan Sri Ghani Minhat (football) and various other awards conferred through the federal or state governments," he said.

At the ceremony, Najib handed over the 'Jalur Gemilang' to the head of the national contingent to the Olympics, Tun Ahmad Sarji Abdul Hamid and the head of the contingent to the Paralympics, Datuk Zolkples Embong.

Thirteen athletes from the Olympics contingent and 16 Paralympic athletes also attended the ceremony.

At the end of the deadline for qualification to the Olympics on Monday, 30 Malaysian athletes had been confirmed for the London meet in eight sporting events namely aquatics, badminton, cycling, fencing, archery, shooting, yachting and athletics.

Meanwhile 23 paralympic athletes confirmed their ticket to London through cycling, archery, yachting, table tennis, powerlifting, swimming and athletics.

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