

**THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE COMMONWEALTH GAMES FEDERATION
(CGF) GENERAL ASSEMBLY**
PALACE OF THE GOLDEN HORSES, SG BESI, KUALA LUMPUR, 8
SEPTEMBER 1998

The Kuala Lumpur 98 -- XVI Commonwealth Games is just days away. Since I last spoke to all of you in December 1991, when invited Commonwealth Games Associations (CGAs) visited Kuala Lumpur to review our facilities and capabilities to host a Commonwealth Games, much has happened. In July in Barcelona, you voted for us to host the XVI Commonwealth Games. From then on we have taken every possible step to make our hosting of the Games a success.

2. Now you can see for yourselves the effort of developing what was then a large piece of vacant land, into a full-fledged sports complex and I hope you will all agree that the Malaysian Government and people have tried to keep the promises we had made.

3. Many of you, especially the Executive Board, have paid us several visits and helped us with your invaluable advice about organising international games. For this, we extend a big 'thank you', not just for your support but for the fact that most of you have become close friends in the spirit of the 'friendly games'.

4. We in Malaysia, welcome all of you here for the Kuala Lumpur 98 Games. We may not receive any medals but we have achieved many firsts. This Commonwealth Games is the first ever held in Asia, the first to be opened by the constitutional monarch of a non-British Commonwealth country, the first to feature team sports, and the first games to receive unprecedented Government support at every level. But that is not all.

5. The Kuala Lumpur 98 is also the first to use the latest information technology for the games and results management systems. It is also the first to set up a host news agency for the organisation of a sporting event and in the history of Commonwealth Games, and Kuala Lumpur makes its mark as the first games with 100 percent turn out, including a new comrade in the Commonwealth Games Association, Kiribati.

6. Ironically, although we may achieve many firsts, Kuala Lumpur 98 happens to be the last great games of this millennium.

7. I assure all of you that Malaysian hospitality, warmth and beauty will add colour to the multi-cultural and multi-religious surroundings in the next few weeks. We are sure that the Malaysian spirit of tolerance and racial harmony will also prevail among the officials and athletes of many races and countries participating in this Games.

8. We are sorry that negative reports about Malaysia and the Games we have organised still persist. But all of you present here will have the opportunity to ascertain for yourselves the truth of the situation. Despite losing several hundred billions of US Dollars due to the speculations by currency traders and stock

market players we have completed all the facilities and preparations for the Commonwealth Games. It is a measure of our commitment to the Games and our seriousness about keeping our promises. We hope that the presence of so many people who would otherwise not visit Malaysia will help to correct the image of Malaysia that has been painted by the less friendly of the international media. We hope that having come from so far away our guests will take time off to visit other parts of the country or at least other parts of the city of Kuala Lumpur beyond the Games Village.

9. The Games is of course not just about winning medals, even though major world records are expected to be broken here. Victory comes in many ways, transcending social and ethnic barriers. Victory for Malaysia would be to carry our good name and to sustain sweet memories of all our foreign guests who come to witness this, the biggest sporting event we have ever hosted.

10. Although sports today is seriously about winning and national pride, I do hope that the old so-called "sporting spirit" will still permeate the games. Winning is important of course but the camaraderie and the spirit of friendly competition should still be valued. In a world so full of bitterness and conflicts we really don't need to bring these into the playing fields as well.

11. I am most happy that members of the CGAs, who have never taken part in past Commonwealth Games, have decided to participate even if it means sending less than ten sportsmen to represent their country. Kuala Lumpur '98 welcomes all of you and we will cheer for you all the way.

12. I welcome all of you again to Kuala Lumpur with the hope that you will see the best Games ever!

13. I now have pleasure in declaring open the Commonwealth Games Federation Assembly 1998. Thank you very much and 'Selamat Datang'.