

SPEECH BY: DATO' SERI DR. MAHATHIR BIN MOHAMAD
(PRIME MINISTER)

EVENT: LAUNCHING OF THE 1998 COMMONWEALTH GAMES BID FUND

VENUE: DATARAN MERDEKA, KUALA LUMPUR (K.L)

DATE: 10 DEC 1991

TIME:

It gives me much pleasure to welcome all the Commonwealth Games Federation Officials and sports leaders from the Commonwealth countries to Malaysia. I hope that during your short stay here, you will enjoy our hospitality for which Malaysians are quite well known and maybe take the opportunity to see something of our country apart from inspecting the sports facilities.

2. Malaysia is a nation of sports lovers like all the other Commonwealth nations. Despite the fact that we have not excelled in sports other than certain games, our love for sports still gives us the enthusiasm to arrange a number of sporting events at the international level and in this respect we can justly say that we have acquired a degree of expertise. We have in the past been very successful in staging a number of world events in various sports and in the next few years we will also be hosting a number of major events such as the Thomas Cup for world badminton championship, the World Corporate Games, the World Cup Golf and the World Cup Junior Football.

3. We are pleased with our successful staging of so many sporting events. There is full Government support in terms of providing the necessary physical facilities and funds to ensure the success of the sporting events. More importantly we always have the full support of our people when we stage these events.

4. In 1989, when we staged the Sea Games we had the full support of Malaysians throughout the country and U.S\$3 million was raised from a torch run which started from Penang in the North and went through various parts of the country. Our people fully support sport because we believe that sport is a strong unifying factor, especially important in a multiracial, multilingual, multicultural and multireligious country like ours. If you have a chance to visit our countryside you will see that we have football fields and other sporting facilities in almost all our towns and villages. This is indeed the basis of our sports policy because we feel through sport we can create a united and healthy nation.

5. We have brought you here because we want you to share our experience if we are given an opportunity to stage the 1998 Commonwealth Games. We have brought you here not only because we want to show you Government support for the bid made by the Olympic Council of Malaysia but we also like to show you that the people of Malaysia fully support our bid.

6. Today we will be launching a fund raising campaign to raise money from members of the public to support the bid for the Commonwealth Games. As a symbolic gesture, we have organised a Commonwealth Games Run which will start immediately after this ceremony. You can see the support we are having with the crowd around us today. In the space of less than a month from the time a decision was taken to organise the run, we have gathered together this large number of people who have all paid a symbolic two ringgit or U.S. 70 cents each to participate in the run. This is only the beginning. For the next three months we will be gathering signatures from hundreds of thousands of Malaysians from all over the country together with their contributions to show their support for the Malaysian bid. We are confident that with the people's support and the support of the Government the Olympic Council of Malaysia will be able to stage a very successful and enjoyable Commonwealth Games.

7. You might like to ask why Malaysia is so keen to host the 1998 Commonwealth Games. We believe that there are many areas which can be used to strengthen the ties among Commonwealth countries. We also believe that there are many areas in which countries can help one another. Sport is one such area where we can definitely increase and strengthen ties among the Commonwealth countries. Sport is very much a people to people thing and through sport the people in the world can get to know one another and create and strengthen the sort of friendly ties that the Commonwealth wants to promote.

8. I am confident you as sports leaders in the Commonwealth will appreciate the efforts we are making in bidding for the 1998 Commonwealth Games. I can assure you that Malaysia will do everything it can to make the 1998 Commonwealth Games the best ever.