

Tawfiq proposes equal incentives for disabled athletes

KOTA KINABALU: The Youth and Sports Ministry is proposing for equal incentives and recognition for disabled athletes as their normal counterparts.

Its Minister, Datuk Tawfiq Abu Bakar Titingan said that he will bring up the matter to the state cabinet for discussion.

"I am confident that the cabinet will agree with this proposal where special athletes will be given equal incentives as normal athletes for their achievements in any games.

"Currently, in the Malaysia Games (Sukma), special athletes are given RM1,000 for every gold medal, whereas normal athletes get RM5,000 for the same achievement," he told a press conference after witnessing the signing of Memorandum of Understanding between Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) Faculty of Psychology and Education and Special Olympics Sabah (SOS) at the university campus here yesterday.

According to Tawfiq, he agrees with the Federal Youth and Sports Ministry's decision to give equal incentives to normal athletes and special athletes.

He said that due to their disabilities, special athletes have to work harder to achieve such feats, and therefore they should be rewarded as much as their normal counterparts, if not more.

In conjunction with the MoU signing, UMS also launched the FunFitness programme which assesses the fitness level of the disabled and creates different exercise regimes for them according to their disabilities.

The objective of the programme is to educate the athletes, their families and coaches on the importance of every component of physical fitness.

According to UMS Vice Chancellor, Datuk Dr Mohd Harun Abdullah, the MoU marks the official collaboration between the two entities where UMS will be providing facilities to SOS' 1,500 registered athletes from all over the state.

Meanwhile, Tawfiq commended the initiative and urged other higher learning institutions to offer capacity building services to the disabled community.

SOS was represented by its president, Datuk Safari Manan.

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AT THE PRESS CONFERENCE ... Tawfiq (centre), witnessing the exchange of documents between Dr Harun (2nd left), and Safari (2nd right).