

Water sports to be at Batu Dam

By Michael Lai

BATU Dam is to be transformed into an international arena for water sports — and may possibly be the scene for the 1998 Commonwealth Games rowing, canoeing and wind-sailing events.

Kuala Lumpur and Adelaide are bidding to host the Games and Youth and Sports Minister Senator Anuar Musa is expected to reveal plans for the events to be held at the dam at the Commonwealth Games Federation meeting in Malta next week.

The host will be selected after the 1992 Olympics in Barcelona.

The 218-hectare lake, located near Batu Caves, 17km from the heart of Kuala Lumpur, was selected as an ideal venue for non-polluting water sports because of its calm water and mild wind conditions.

Youth and Sports Ministry Secretary-General Ahmad Zabri Ibrahim told the *New Straits Times* the dam will be the focal point of international water sports when plans to develop facilities for rowing, canoeing and wind-sailing are completed.

It is believed plans for such a venue was mooted about two years ago with the Commonwealth Games in mind.

The dam will also act as a training ground for water sports athletes.

Encik Zabri said the Ministry was awaiting approval from the State and Federal Governments before embarking on the project.

If given the go-ahead, the lake would be ready for use by the end of this year and



ENCIK AHMAD ZABRI
...the best choice

fully facilitated in 18 months.

The Ministry has obtained the agreements of the Drainage and Irrigation Department and Selangor Waterworks to turn the dam into an international sports venue.

"I do not anticipate any rejection of the plans by either the State or Federal Governments, although they will want to know the measures for maintaining cleanliness in the lake."

"We have already bought \$1.2 million worth of water sports equipment," he said.

To prevent pollution of the dam, which supplies Selangor Waterworks with 118 million litres of water a day, motorised water sports have been discounted from the list of permissible activities.

Encik Zabri said: "Later, we will also introduce other water sports but these activities have to be compatible with our desire to see that the lake is kept pollution-free."

City Hall's Architecture and Special Projects Department is looking into plans for the building of the facilities.

Essential facilities like the boat-houses, jetties, and the start/end markers for rowing and canoeing will be constructed first, said Encik Zabri, adding that training for the water sports could begin immediately after that.

This would be followed by the building of a spectators' gallery, toilets and possibly a hostel with a canteen to accommodate athletes.

"The lake is ready for training and sports demonstrations."

"However, we have to transport the rowing boats and canoes now as there are no boat-houses at the moment," he said.

The Ministry has plans to organise international rowing and canoeing regattas once the dam is fully equipped with the necessary facilities and technical people are adequately trained to manage water sports.

Encik Zabri said, the dam, normally a restricted area, will be open to the public during competitions and demonstrations.

Batu Dam was built in 1985 at a cost of \$20 million and commissioned in 1987 primarily to prevent flooding in the city.

About 30 per cent of the water in the dam, believed to be one of the cleaner dams in Klang Valley, is for consumption.

Its catchment reservoir is fed by the Batu and Tua rivers and it channels water to the Waterworks Department treatment plant that caters to Jinjang and Batu Caves.

Ready-made rowing course

BATU Dam is an ideal venue for international water sports like rowing, canoeing and wind-sailing.

The water is clean, calm, and the wind conditions are mild on normal days. The dam has the required length for competition rowing course, which is at least 2.2 kilometres.

The venue has been recommended to the Youth and Sports Ministry by a technical expert from the International Rowing Federation (FISA), Don Rowland, who described it as one of the best locations in the world for water sports.

This was revealed by Ministry Secretary-General Ahmad Zabri Ibrahim, who recounted what Mr Rowland had said during the latter's

visit to Malaysia late last year.

Encik Zabri said three sites had initially been earmarked as possible locations for an international venue for water sports.

The other two were Taman Tasik Wahyu and Taman Tasik Batu Muda.

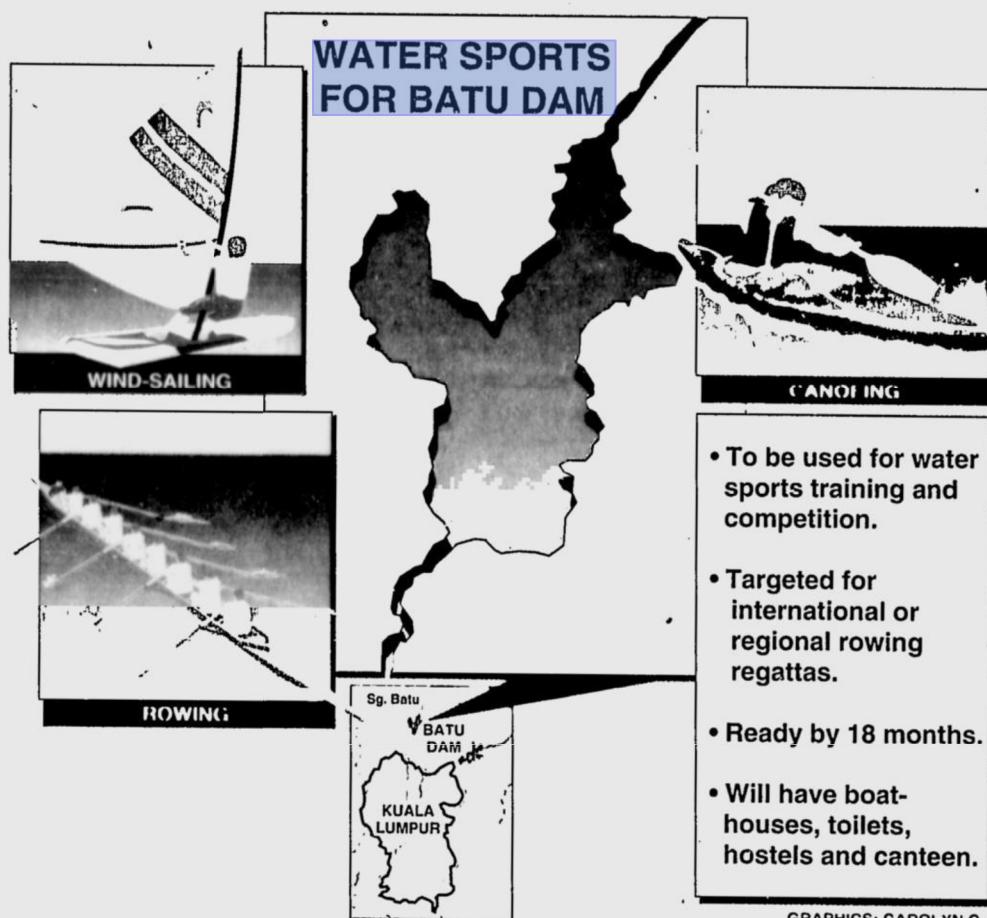
However, Taman Tasik Wahyu was rejected because it is a "wind tunnel", caused by high hills bordering the lake which made sporting activities difficult.

"After careful observations, Mr Rowland had recommended the Batu Dam as the best choice and predicted the lake would become one of the premier water sports venues in the world."

He said the Batu Dam needed only minimal facil-

ties as the rowing course is already there. We don't need to make any alterations to the lake," he said.

Encik Zabri said training



GRAPHICS: CAROLYN C.



BATU DAM... ideal venue for water sports activities because of its calm water. —Picture by Philip Chong.

INSIDE



WOMEN AT KG BARU STALLS

WOMAN power! That's what reigns at the temporary stalls along Jalan Raja Alang in Kampung Baru. Women come to the fore at Ramadan each year, and for 30 days they dominate the food trade, at least in this Malay residential area.

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ROTARY TEAM FOR U.S.

MEMBERS of the Group Study Exchange team from Philadelphia are here for a six-week tour. Rotary Clubs in Malaysia will also be sending their own group of people to Philadelphia. The team will leave for the US on April 11. Among those selected is *Lifestyle* journalist Pang Yin Fong.

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PRESERVING GREENERY

KUALA LUMPUR may have to adopt a Forestry Department proposal to protect what remains of its primary greenery. The Department's pro-