

Batu Dam project awaits nod

By Ramlan Said

WORK to transform the Batu Dam into an international arena for water sports will begin soon after the Cabinet gives its approval.

A paper on the cost and other project matters is being prepared by the Youth and Sports Ministry.

The designs and proposed facilities at the dam, expected to cost some \$5 million, is being prepared by City

Hall's Architecture and Special Projects Department.

Youth and Sports Ministry secretary-general Ahmad Zabri Ibrahim said he expects the paper to be ready in one month.

"I do not anticipate any rejection of the plans by the Government as this place is ideal for the project."

The Ministry has got the agreements of the Drainage and Irrigation Department and Selangor Waterworks.

Encik Ahmad Zabri said the first phase of the project will involve construction of facilities like the boat-houses, jetties and the start/end markers for rowing and canoeing.

This would be followed by the building of a spectators' gallery, toilets and possibly a canteen for athletes.

Encik Ahmad Zabri said all the facilities are expected to be in place a year after work starts.

The Ministry is placing emphasis on the project as the dam may be the scene for the 1998 Commonwealth Games rowing, canoeing and wind-sailing events.

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

Kuala Lumpur and Adelaide are bidding to host the Games. The successful city will be selected after the 1992 Olympics in Barcelona.

The 218-hectare lake near Batu Caves, 23km from the heart of Kuala Lumpur, was selected as an ideal avenue for non-polluting water sports because of its calm water and mild wind conditions.

Encik Ahmad Zabri, who visited the dam last Thursday, said he was impressed with what he saw there.

"I have no doubt that this place will become one of the premier water sports ven-

ues in the world as predicted by experts in the fields."

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

Encik Ahmad Zabri said the Batu Dam needed only minimal facilities as the rowing course was already there.

"We do not have to make any alterations to the lake as the rowing course is much longer and wider than required by international standards."

(International standards require a rowing course to be 2.2km long. The course at Batu Dam is 3.2km long.)

The selection of Batu Dam as the venue has also saved the Government money.

Initially, before Batu Dam was discovered, two other sites were earmarked for the project — Taman Tasik Wahyu and Taman Tasik Batu Muda — but the cost was much higher as some alterations had to be carried out at the lakes.

Encik Ahmad Zabri said the only concern about the project was to prevent pollution of the dam which supplies Selangor Waterworks with 118 million litres of water a day.



Encik Ahmad Zabri (second from left) at the dam.