National regus add spice to c'ships

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KOTA KINABALU: The presence of national top regus will add that extra flair at the ASTAKA Deputy President’s Cup Sepaktakraw Championships 2012 that takes centre stage at the Tun Mustapha Hall in Kudat from today.

Despite not competing in the Under-21 tournament, the two national regus will be the centre of attraction as they will be pitted against each other in an exhibition match right after the opening ceremony that has been slated for 9.30am (today).

Tourism, Culture and Environment Assistant Minister Datuk Bolkiah Ismail is expected to grace the opening ceremony, while Astaka President Datuk Awang Sham Amit will officiate at the closing on Sunday.

In addition to the exhibition match, another interesting factor of the tournament is the inclusion of the national women’s regus and the State Sukma women’s squad (two regus), who are among the 24 teams vying for honours in the two-day competition.

Besides that, Astaka will also be parading three of its Sukma regus.

Astaka Deputy President Mahmud Awang Hussin said this is one good opportunity for the Sukma boys and girls to showcase their talents, as well as gain the much needed match temperament.

Mahmud, who is also the State Sukma squad team manager, added that several top local regus are expected to present some strong challenges to the squad but his foreign-coached players have been at the peak of their performance.

"We have high expectations to see some top-quality sepakukraw action in this tournament, especially from the State Sukma men’s squads, who have undergone some training changes under Thai coach, Suthep Chantranusor. The boys have been training under Suthep for the past month and their performance has notably improved. This gives us reason to expect something from them at this tournament and we hope they will carry it through to Pahang for this year’s Malaysia Games (Sukma) in July.

The State Sukma boys are Tekongs; Mazlan Baalon, Radzi Awang, Aminuddin Kamin and Famie Azhar, Killers; Fakriilah Abdul Muada, Jemis George, Noryelszan Razley and Jacxon Amptung and Feeders; Daud Amba, Rizal Zukpli and Norhadi Yaya.

Other regus that would feature in the two-day tournament are from Sandakan, Labuan, Royal Malaysian Police (PDRM), Beaufort, Kota Belud, Penampang, Kota Kinabalu, Nabawan and Keningau.

In the draw conducted yesterday, the three participating women regus – Wanita Malaysia and Sukma Wannita A and Sukma Wannita – have been drawn in Group A, while Group B comprises Sabah Masjid Nabawan A, Sukma Boys B and Astaka Sandakan A.

In Group C are Sabah Masjid Nabawan C, UMS A and Beaufort A, while Group D includes Perseis Kota Belud, Sukma Boys A, Matunggung B and Binanding Unit.

The teams in Group E are Masab, Kota Belud and Astaka Sandakan C, while Group F comprises Kinainais Papar, UMS B and Beluran A, and Group G, First Touch, Pekan Papar and Beaufort B.

As for Group H, the teams are Kg Perpaduan, Sukma Boys C and Astaka Sandakan B, while the remaining teams, L.A. Junior, Beluran B, Sabah Masjid Nabawan B and Matunggung A make up Group I.

This U-21 tournament, which is also a scouting platform for the State Sukma coach to identify new talents, offers RM2,000 for the champions, RM1,500 for the runners-up and RM750 each for joint third place teams.

Also expected to be present at the opening ceremony are Malaysia Sepaktakraw Association President Datuk Hj Ahmad Ismail and National Sports Council Director-General, Datuk Zolkples Embong.

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