

THE Glasgow 2014 XX Commonwealth Games was an unqualified success. It reportedly received various acclaim. Commonwealth Games Federation chief executive Mike Hooper hailed it as "the standout games in the history of the movement".

It was a memorable achievement for Scotland and some likened it to the 2012 Summer Olympics for England. The fastest man on Earth, Usain Bolt, described the games as "just like the London Olympics" amidst reports that he was critical of the former. Despite the absence of several games hopefuls and celebrities, the stature of the games remained untarnished.

The inclusion of sports such as netball and squash added to the diversity not seen in the Olympics.

The games too made it possible for small island states like Kiribati in the South Pacific to win its first medal — a gold for the 105kg men's

# In the spirit of sports

weightlifting competition — at the event: Unfortunately, in the rush for medals, some countries resorted to so-called foreign imports under a special scheme where talented foreign athletes are identified and given special privileges including citizenship to represent the nation in prestigious sporting events.

This brings sports to a new low where some likened this to "buying" a medal through a proxy rather than "competing" for one in true sporting fashion.

Sadly, this is nothing new as sports get more commercialised, and medal tally translates into national pride regardless of the way it is at-

tained. Today, it is not only the colour of the medals that matters, but also the skin colour of the players. Football and basketball are the more notable examples. According to Al-Jazeera, even celebrities like Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, the all-time leading US NBA scorer, was marginalised from the league for his candid comments on racism in sports.

This, in turn, fuelled rage against racism in sports as those affected launched their own creative protests in public. The incident at the 1968 Mexico City Olympics — where US track and field medallists Tommie Smith and John Carlos raised their fists while the US anthem was played to epitomise "black power" — remains the most symbolic of such protests.

In other words, sports is put under more scrutiny as it pays less attention to socio-cultural sensitivities of nations taking part in international competitions. For the Commonwealth Games that has

taken place for 20 times in various continents, it is only fair to expect such sensitivities to be taken into account in the spirit of tolerance and fair play that underpin the *raison d'être* of sports.

The listing of Chinese names on scoreboards is a glaring example as "surnames" are wrongly identified based on the assumption that as they always appear at the end, all names follow the same naming convention.

The names of men's double gold badminton medallists from Malaysia, for example, were displayed on the scoreboard as Tan Wee KIONG and Goh Wei SHEM similar to English bronze medallists Chris LANGRIDGE and Peter MILLS. While it is all right for the English pair, not so for the Malaysians! The same mistake is rampant even in academic and business circles.

For Mohd Hafifi Mansor, the Malaysian gold medallist for the

men's weightlifting 69kg category, the case is more precarious, since Malays in general do not have a surname as such. But yet "Mansor" (the father's name) is treated as the surname.

What is most astonishing is that there seems to be no attempt to understand, let alone rectify such discrepancies ever since the inception of the games as the British Empire Games in 1930 before the change to the current name as an international, multi-sport event involving athletes from the Commonwealth of Nations.

Come 2018, as a genuine gesture to celebrate diversity reflecting the essence of the Commonwealth, the "naming" assumptions should be revised for the next Commonwealth Games in Australia, especially when the Commonwealth Games Federation is still headed by a well-known Malaysian who is familiar with the naming predicament.

It will be better if more diverse international competitive sports like *sepak takraw* are included in recognition of the cultural richness of the Commonwealth as represented by the types of sports.



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