

# A Proton and house if players regain cup

17 MAY 1990

By Ooi Lay Beng

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. — The Malaysian Thomas Cup players will each be given a house and 1.5 export model Proton Saga if they win the trophy, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamed said today.

This incentive is in addition to \$80,000 from the National Sports Council and cash from a bank for every point difference in matches won in the Thomas Cup final rounds in Japan.

But as the Prime Minister told the shuttlers at a luncheon he hosted for them: "The biggest incen-

tive is to win for the country."

Dr Mahathir said the Thomas Cup campaign was a national project and aspiration. "Everyone, irrespective of what party, race or religion they belong to, should give their support," he said.

And he told the nine players: "When we play in Japan, the squad should stand as Team Malaysia because it represents our common goal and effort.

"You will be playing for your country and proving that Malaysia can beat the rest of the world in this sport."

The players leave for Nagoya on Saturday for the tournament starting on May 25. The Prime Minister's wife, Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah, will be there to lend moral support in the preliminary rounds.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia did not have Peles and Maradonas in football, and top stars in the other sports. "But in badminton, Malaysia has the capability to reach the top. We have done it before," he said, referring to the four times that the country had won the cup, the last occasion in 1967.

Dr Mahathir advised the players to be disciplined and committed to their goal.

"You should not let other small matters and complaints deter you from your goal. For the moment, players, coaches and officials should put all small matters aside and work towards a common goal," he said.

Dr Mahathir was happy with the preparations for the players, who have just completed a three-week training stint at the Genting Highlands, and hoped that they keep up their spirit.

The luncheon guests at the Pan Pacific Hotel included Youth and Sports Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak, National Sports Council Director-General Datuk Kamalul Ariffin, BAM president Datuk Elyas Omar and chief coach Punch Gunalan.

The Protons are estimated to cost \$33,000 each while the value and the location of the houses were not revealed.

The players were overjoyed with the incentive.

"It is a very good incentive for us," said doubles ace Jalani Sidek. "It will certainly spur us to train as well as fight harder."

His brothers Razif, Rashid and Rahman and the other players — Foo Kok Keong, Cheah Soon Kit, Soo Beng Klang, Kwan Yoke Meng and Ong Ewe Chye — readily agreed.