

Shuttlers and coach get Sagas

By Randhir Singh

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. — The nine-man Malaysian Thomas Cup team and Chinese coach Han Jian will each be rewarded with an export model Proton Saga by the Government for their performance in Tokyo.

The Thomas Cup players were promised a Proton Saga and a house each if they win the Cup. China outclassed Malaysia 4-1 in the final but the qualified success was edging Indonesia 3-2 in a hard-fought semifinal.

Announcing the reward at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport today, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ma-

hathir Mohamad said the players deserved the car although they did not win the cup.

"They played well and hopefully, the next time around Malaysia will be the winners," said Dr Mahathir.

"I hope they will put in more effort and train harder."

Other than the car, the players will also share the \$40,000 which they are eligible for under the National Sports Council's incentive scheme for finishing runners-up in a world-class event.

This was the first time the Prime Minister was on hand to welcome home a sports team.

Dr Mahathir and his wife,

Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah, were among hundreds of fans who turned up to give the team a rousing welcome.

Dr Mahathir said the Government would fully support badminton as it felt that it was one sport which the country had potential to become world champions.

The Prime Minister said that although he had shown enthusiasm in sports, particularly badminton, he did not intend to hold any post in the Olympic Council of Malaysia or any other sports bodies.

"Support I will give, but I will not hold any position. It is not just holding a post but you must have the time. So I can't get into it."

Badminton Association of Malaysia president Datuk Elyas Omar, who was also at the airport, promised the Prime Minister that Malaysia would not only win the 1992 Thomas Cup but also a gold medal at the Barcelona Olympics.

He said Malaysia would bid to host the 1992 Thomas Cup. Singapore and Hong Kong are other countries which have expressed interest to play host.

Top doubles pair Razif and Jalani Sidek presented their racquets to the Prime Minister's wife, who supported the team at the preliminary rounds in Nagoya.

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