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Mahathir-sports (with pix)

DISCARD "VILLAGE CHAMPION" IMAGE. DR M TELLS SPORTSMEN

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BANGI, June 8 (Bernama) -- National sportsmen should discard the "village champion" image and instead strive to become world champions, the Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

National sportsmen, who could only win on home turf and lose when competing abroad, would only be ridiculed by outsiders, he said.

They were still dependent on local support to spur them to win in competitions despite being physically fit, he said when addressing the Singapore-bound Malaysian contingent for 17th SEA Games at the national training camp here.

He then handed over the Malaysian flag to the chef-de-mission Datuk Khalid Yunus.

Dr Mahathir said national sportsmen should be physically and spiritually strong and have the self-discipline to attain international-class status. -- more

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The Prime Minister said their target should be to emerge as "national champion today, regional champion tomorrow and world champion the day after".

"Each athlete should aspire to be a world champion, perhaps not within reach now, but he should work towards it from now so that the next generation can make it happen later," he said.

This objective could be realised provided national sportsmen were highly disciplined, in perfect frame of mind, physically fit and would never allow themselves to be overcome by the fear of losing, he said.

Dr Mahathir said national sportsmen should not depend on fan's support to boost their spirit but should instead rely on intrinsic push to capture a particular title.

"If we expect our fans' support to weaken our opponents, the real winners are not the players but the crowd that gives the support," he said.
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Dr Mahathir said sportsmen should also be able to take orders and move as a team in order to give maximum performance in any competition.

The Prime Minister reminded members of the national contingent of their responsibility to preserve Malaysia's good name in all the events they would be taking part in.

"Although they are only games, national reputation is at stake," he said.

Dr Mahathir congratulated the sportsmen for having undergone training at the camp at the Sultan Ahmad Shah Training Institute here.

Their stint there was significant because it made them aware that victory in any competition was not only determined by physical strength but also the fighting spirit and mental power.

Dr Mahathir presented a government grant for RM500,000 to the Olympic Council of Malaysia president Tan Sri Hamzah Abu Samah for the upkeep of the sportsmen while in Singapore. -- Bernama

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