

24 FEB 1996

Hockey-Mahathir

ALLEGATIONS OF MATCH FIXING IS AN INSULT, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 24 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that Canada's allegation of match fixing between Malaysia and India during the pre-Olympic hockey qualifier last month was an insult to both countries.

He called on the Canada hockey authorities to prove the allegations and not to tarnish the image of the countries.

"They should report the allegations earlier on. It is easy to make allegations and they should prove it." Dr Mahathir told reporters after receiving sponsorship cheques worth more than RM3.3 million for the Le Tour de Langkawi Cycling Championship.

The Canadian Hockey Federation (CHF) had reported to the International Hockey Federation (FIH) that Malaysia and India had conspired to fix the match to a draw in Barcelona last month.

The match ended in a scoreless draw and enabled Malaysia to clinch the fifth place final ticket for the Atlanta Olympic Games in the United States in July. India also qualified for Atlanta.

The CHF also alleged that the conspiracy was designed by Malaysian Hockey Federation (MHF) Deputy President, Datuk P. Alagendra and Indian Hockey Federation (IHF) secretary K. Jothi Kumaran.

Canada also claimed that six Indian players were alleged to have accepted money for "arranging" a match result during or after the match.

FIH will convene a disciplinary committee meeting to deliberate the case on March 2.

Dr Mahathir also hoped that Malaysia would organise one of the circuits of the World Formula One racing championship before 1999 in the Klang Valley and not Pulau Langkawi as earlier planned.

"We want to bring this major event here," he said.

He said that the Selangor state government would take over land on which the present Shah Alam Motorsports Paradise (SAMP) circuit in Batu Tiga, Shah Alam, was situated and an alternative circuit would be identified.

Initially the World Formula One circuit was supposed to be in Pulau Langkawi but the idea had to be cancelled as the championship attracted a minimum of 30,000 spectators which the island's circuit could not accommodate, he said.

"The Klang Valley has the population to come and watch the race. It will cost about US\$25 million (about RM62 million) to host the Formula One and I hope private sectors will help to bear the cost," he said.

On the Le Tour de Langkawi of which he is the patron, Dr Mahathir hoped donors would be generous enough to meet the organisers' expenses for the tour schedule from Feb 29 to March 10.

It was reported that the tour, which offers prize money of RM1 million, will cost the organisers about RM9 million to stage.

Dr Mahathir hoped that more foreign television stations would give coverage of the tour and Malaysia in general to balance adverse reports on the country.

He also hoped that the tour would be an annual affair and would grow in status in years to come, similar to Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace Exhibition (LIMA). -- BERNAMA

DC AO