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Mahathir-Athletes

M'SIAN ATHLETES SPOILT BY MANY INCENTIVES

TELUK INTAN, July 4 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said granting too many gifts as incentives has spoilt some Malaysian athletes so much so that they have lost fighting spirit in competitions.

The Prime Minister said the selfish and self-interest attitude now affecting some of the country's athletes when competing at international level were due to this showering of incentives for success.

"We have only one such case. I think we have gone overboard," he told reporters after launching Rural Vision Movement at Felcra Seberang Perak, near here today.

Yesterday National Sports Council (NSC) director-general, Datuk Mazlan Ahmad said the Prime Minister, when chairing the Commonwealth Sports 1998 Council meeting on Monday, wanted state governments, companies and sponsors not to go overboard in offering incentives to athletes to spur them to achieve success.

"We made them think only of their own interest. Previously they were very serious in fighting for the glory of the nation," he said when asked whether the nation's athletes now stressed more importance to their own interest than that of the country.

Dr Mahathir said too many incentives also caused some of them to feel high about themselves.

"We can pay reasonable sum. If we go overboard people will feel they are worth very much more, so much so if they are not well treated they feel dissatisfied," he said.

The Prime Minister said Malaysia is not rich in oil like other countries which could present luxury cars and houses to athletes who achieve success.

Asked whether the incentive schemes now needed a review, he replied "It is up to the NSC."

Dr Mahathir felt that in order to be a good athlete one needed to be highly disciplined and not given too many incentives.

He cited foreign cyclists who took part in the Le Tour de Langkawi early this year. They were so dedicated that any free time was used for training and at night they slept early to prepare for the race next day.

"They even take their bicycles into their rooms. They go to that extent to show how much they love their bicycles," he said. -- BERNAMA

AH MTA ABG