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Annuar, Hamzah - the men behind Hashim

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SOMETIMES there is a tendency in Malaysian sport to say or assume something without knowing the facts. Often it is just based on hearsay.

Of late you hear remarks made that are totally untrue about how Sukom executive chairman Jen (rtd) Tan Sri Hashim Ali was appointed by the Prime Minister.

To set the record straight, Hashim was the choice of then Sports Minister, Datuk Annuar Musa, and Olympic Council of Malaysia (OCM) president Tan Sri Hamzah Abu Samah.

There were other names too that were considered but Annuar and Hamzah saw it fit to recommended Hashim.

As the OCM president and the Sports Minister are considered the supremos of Malaysian sport, they were the right people to pick the Sukom chief.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad merely endorsed their choice.

One would have thought the sport supremos must have gone through a thorough process before picking Hashim whose only link to sport was that he was president of the Royal Selangor Golf Club. He still is.

In terms of organising sporting events, he had a hand in the 1977 Sea Games when he was a colonel in the Armed Forces.

It should also be mentioned that when Hashim's name was put to the Prime Minister, he was retiring as Chief of the Armed Forces.

Traditionally, the Government have rewarded senior civil servants for their long and dedicated service to the country.

They are either appointed to head statutory bodies like the Employees Provident Fund and the Public Services Commission, or Government companies such as Permodalan Nasional.

So Hashim's nomination must have eased the Government's responsibility of looking for a slot for him elsewhere.

OCM officials have now conveniently forgotten that Hashim was their choice and they are shifting the responsibility to others.

These are the kind of sports officials we have to deal with these days. They hide behind someone else. They don't own up to their decisions.

They use others as a shield and it is quite common in most sports, especially those headed by royalty. Take Malaysian soccer and hockey for example.

When you question them over certain decisions their standard reply is: "Oh, Tuanku wants it" or "it was Tuanku's directive."

For the record Sultan Ahmad Shah heads the Football Association of Malaysia and Sultan Azlan Shah has been the hockey supremo for two decades.

Some of the minions love to drop the Tuanku's name and it works as Malaysians are by and large deferential and do not question a decision made by a royalty or a Minister.

In badminton, there was a time nothing moved without "Datin Seri's" approval. From selection of players to officials, it was "Datin Seri." Datin Seri is Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali, the wife of the Prime Minister, who is BAM patron.

For all you know, the poor "Tuankus" and "Datin Seris" are not even aware that their name are freely used by these unscrupulous officials.

These officials know only too well that media access to some of these personalities is difficult, and so the validity of their claim remain unconfirmed.

The RM70 million Langkawi range is another example of how officials shift the blame when the signs of things going awry begin to emerge.

Granted, it was the Prime Minister who mooted the idea of hosting the Commonwealth Games shooting event in Langkawi. But it was the officials who got carried away and built a RM70 million range, with some technical specifications wrong.

Hopefully, the RM350 million Sepang Formula One track, another one of Dr Mahathir's ideas, will be carefully handled, both in terms of construction and cost. Malaysian Airports Berhad should scrutinise the cost as some believe the RM350 million estimate is on the steep side.

They should be cautious and not accept everything their foreign consultants recommend, especially pertaining to the procurement of equipment and material which can be sourced locally such as electronic scoreboards, television and telecommunications equipment.

Incidentally, it was a Malaysian construction company, Instantgreen, that built the Formula One track in Zhuhai, China for RM100 million. World Formula One supremo Bernie Ecclestone was sufficiently impressed and declared Zhuhai fit to host a leg of the Formula One.

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