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PM regrets attitude of athletes, officials (HL)

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LANGKAWI, Sun. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today regretted that some athletes and sports association officials were more concerned about their own interests than those of the nation.

He said that such people gave scant regard to the interest of the nation in the coming Commonwealth Games.

Dr Mahathir said this when asked to comment on the bickering within certain sports bodies highlighted from time to time in the media. Dr Mahathir is here on an overnight visit.

He had earlier visited the Langkawi International Shooting Range which will be the only venue outside the Klang Valley for the Games.

"I don't want to interfere ... but it appears that the disputing parties should engage in a boxing match and the winner represent the country in the Games," Dr Mahathir said when asked to comment on the controversy in badminton.

In badminton, the pernicious relationship between feuding bodies, the Badminton Association of Malaysia and professional outfit Nusa Mahsuri, saw one of the nation's most talented singles players Roslin Hashim getting the boot for walking out of the national training camp.

Roslin, who was named the third singles by the BAM on July 31, skipped training since last Wednesday - one day after he reported to the camp.

BAM had earlier shut the doors on the Nusa Mahsuri shuttler following an impasse on a dispute with the professional club over the payment of training allowances and tournament fees.

However, Youth and Sports Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin intervened and BAM agreed to re-open its doors, provided the shuttlers came through their respective badminton associations.

Roslin, through the Kelantan BA, found his way back into squad, but BAM excluded his Nusa Mahsuri mate Rashid Sidek. Roslin's personal coach Misbun Sidek was also not named.

Roslin, unhappy that Misbun was not involved, stayed away from training, and was consequently sacked from the squad on Friday.

In gymnastics, "parent politics" created a stir when rhythmic gymnast Farrah Zelina Kemal did not make to the final Games squad.

Her parents contested the decision, and there was an attempt by the Olympic Council of Malaysia to include the gymnast at the expense of Sarina Sundara Rajah.

Following that, the fathers of the four selected gymnasts in resonance threatened to pull their daughters out of the squad, if there was any change to the selection.

On the shooting range, the Prime Minister said he was happy with the preparations for the shooting events though there was a need to improve on the landscaping.

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