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Badminton-Mahathir

THOMAS CUP SQUAD TOLD TO THINK OF GLORY FOR COUNTRY

KUALA LUMPUR, May 6 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has advised the national shuttlers not to think of material gains but to strive to bring glory to the country when playing in the Thomas Cup Finals in Hong Kong.

"Don't think of the material gains but remember the glory you, your family and the country will receive if you bring back the Cup."

This was the message Dr Mahathir conveyed to the Thomas Cup squad through his wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, who hosted the team to "hi-tea" at a leading hotel here today.

Dr Siti Hasmah also told the team not to think of money or other incentives but to put the country before everything else when they do battle in Hong Kong from May 16-24.

"If you have a negative attitude you will end up as a failure...If you have a positive attitude then you will get somewhere," said Dr Siti Hasmah, the country's number one badminton fan.

Dr Siti Hasmah said the players had beaten world-class shuttlers before and with the guidance of chief coach Morten Frost and Misbun Sidek the team should be able to live up to expectations.

She would be in Hong Kong to support the team if they qualify for the final.

"My husband said I can only go to Hong Kong if the team make it into the final," she said.

In his address to the team, Badminton Association of Malaysia (BAM) president Datuk Dr Abdullah Fadzil Che Wan said they have full confidence in the team despite the absence of Rashid Sidek.

He said the present team were more united than the 1996 squad.

"We would like to forget the 1996 episode...I feel comfortable this time as all problems have been patched up here before we leave for Hong Kong," he said.

In the 1996 Finals in Hong Kong, Malaysia failed to qualify for the semifinals for the first time since 1986.

The squad then also comprised players from BAM and Nusa Mahsuri, a professional club run by former doubles ace Jalani Sidek, and their failure was largely attributed to a rift between players from the two camps.

Frost, who is BAM Director of Coaching, said the team were well prepared and ready to face the challenges in the final round.

"In my 20 years of playing and coaching, I haven't seen a team with such good preparations. I am looking forward to it," said the former Danish great who took up the job here last year.

Team manager Datuk Al-Amin Majid said although Malaysia had targeted the semifinals, he hoped the team could qualify for the final and go on to win the Cup.

Malaysia last won the Cup in 1992 in Kuala Lumpur.

The team, who leave for Hong Kong on May 14, will play South Korea in their opening match on May 16. -- BERNAMA

DC YBY