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Sports-Frost (News Analysis)

QUESTIONS ABOUND AS FROST CALLS IT QUITTS

By: Azman Ujang

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 23 (Bernama) -- In an era when transparency seems to be the buzz word, secrecy surrounds the sudden resignation of Morten Frost Hansen as Malaysia's national badminton coaching director.

Both the Badminton Association of Malaysia (BAM) and Frost have refused to give reasons for the bombshell announcement made yesterday in a brief statement by the BAM.

The press and the badminton fraternity are understandably curious about why Frost, whose appointment in February 1997 was described as one of the biggest coups staged by the BAM, decided to part company in a huff, 15 months before the end of his four-year contract.

"The BAM have agreed to the termination of the contract with Morten Frost on mutual agreement," was all that BAM president Datuk Dr Abdullah Fadzil Che Wan would say on the matter.

Frost, one of the greatest badminton players the world has ever seen in his time, was equally secretive, saying the reasons for quitting were something between him and the BAM.

Frost was said to have taken this episode as an affront to his professionalism, especially when the player that Lim had picked, Chor Hooi Yee, was injured.

Following this, Frost was said to have handed in his resignation to Dr Fadzil but apparently, a decision on the matter was held up until yesterday's announcement.

Dr Fadzil, when contacted today, told Bernama: "It's best to leave this episode to pass. Both Frost and the BAM have agreed to part on a happy note".

He said that getting Frost to Malaysia was definitely a coup for Malaysian badminton and Frost was perhaps the best coach the BAM ever had.

Asked why he, as the BAM boss had allowed others to interfere in Frost's selection of players, he said: "It was a lesson well learnt. We are learning lessons everyday and we benefit from this".

Dr Fadzil said he had always told BAM officials to discuss openly among themselves areas of disagreement over any matter and not to adopt a stubborn attitude.

" Perhaps communication is one problem we are having and I will have to put my foot down on this now that I can devote more time to BAM," said Dr Fadzil, who was a deputy minister for 15 years but was dropped from the new line-up of deputy ministers announced by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on Dec 10.

He said the BAM would hold a meeting soon to decide on Frost's successor who would have to get down to work right away, given the major task ahead -- the Thomas Cup and the Olympics next year.

But Frost, in a telephone interview with Bernama today, insisted that he was not ready to reveal the reasons, saying that he would be flying home to Denmark tomorrow to spend his Christmas and would be away for two weeks.

"Perhaps another time," he said, obviously trying to keep mum on what he admitted was the "downside" of his stint in Malaysia.

He said he had enjoyed his stint in Malaysia despite having to undertake a "very tough" job.

He had done his best and was very satisfied with the results achieved in his 33 months here during which Malaysian players had won many of the top international competitions.

Frost said he would in the future like to be actively involved in what he called " the politics of badminton" especially in making badminton a truly worldwide sport.

"We still have long way to go before badminton can truly be played worldwide ...obviously it is very popular in Asia and Denmark but not so in Europe, America, Australia and New Zealand".

" I am open to suggestions on my future plans but I hope to be involved in the European Badminton Union," he said.

"When I look back, it has not been so bad after all..some people would say we did not achieve much but I think we have to be have patience before we could see the results that we planned for," he said.

And how does he see the future of Malaysian badminton, the only sport the country has been world champions in?

The future could only be better as Malaysia had a talented pool of young players, he said, adding: "Denmark would be very happy if we have as many good players as you".

Frost said he planned to see more of Malaysia as a tourist before bidding the country goodbye in March next year.

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