

Malaysians urged to support shuttlers

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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday urged Malaysians to rally behind the Thomas and Uber Cups team to boost the players' confidence to win the tournament.

"Although only a few shuttlers would be taking part in the tournament, which starts on May 11, the

whole nation of 22 million people should also be involve to ensure that they bring back the Cup, especially the Thomas Cup which Malaysia last won in 1992.

"Our participation is no less than that of our heroes, although we cannot enter the badminton court to play," he said at the

Thomas/Uber Cup Run 2000 in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

Dr Mahathir said the people would be following the tournament no matter where they are because, win or lose, the Cup means a lot to the nation.

"The Thomas Cup is very close to the hearts of the people and we should not

view the tournament as we would any other sporting event because the Thomas Cup championship has very strong national implications," he said.

Hence, he wanted to see Malaysians filling up the stadium and cheering the national squad while those who cannot make it to the stadium should follow the

tournament through the media.

"I hope the specatators in the stadium will cheer the national players to boost their spirit. But don't heckle them if they fail or fall while playing because we must help them to rise and continue to fight to win," he said.