

08/05/2000

Support the players, says PM

Ramlan Said

THE Prime Minister yesterday called on all Malaysians to rally behind the Thomas Cup and Uber Cup teams to boost the players' confidence.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Malaysians should throw their undivided support to the teams, and one way of doing this was to fill up seats at Putra Stadium.

Malaysia last won the Thomas Cup in 1992.

"Spectators play an important role ... if the teams are not doing well, we should not run down the players. Instead, they should be encouraged to fight back and perform better," said Dr Mahathir at the prize presentation ceremony of the Thomas Cup-Uber Cup Run at Dataran Merdeka in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

Dr Mahathir said the tournaments concerned the nation's pride as the players were actually representing all Malaysians.

He expressed confidence that with support and prayers from the people, Malaysia would win the most coveted tournament in badminton.

Also present were the country's No 1 badminton fan and BA of Malaysia patron Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, Sports Minister Datuk Hishammuddin Hussein and BAM president Datuk Dr Abdullah Fadzil Che Wan.

Unlike other sports, Dr Mahathir felt the Thomas Cup had a greater impact on Malaysians as it was closer to their hearts and had strong national implications.

"Although we cannot enter the court to play, our role is no less important in cheering the teams to victory. In fact, one can say that 22 million Malaysians are behind the players each time they take on their opponents."

Dr Mahathir also made public a secret about himself and the Thomas Cup, telling the audience that he would usually skip watching the matches.

"I can't watch exciting games because I get too excited. So, I have to rely on Siti Hasmah to convey to me the results later," he said to laughter from those present.

* YUAN Yu Fang, who recently won the KL Towerthon and KL International Marathon, continued her fine run by winning the women's Open of the Malaysia Boleh Thomas Cup-Uber Cup Run at Dataran Merdeka yesterday.

The national walker-runner covered the seven kilometres in 26:29, more than half-a-minute ahead of second-placed S. Devamani.

Devamani clocked 27:03 while Suwaibah Mohamed Nasir was third in 27:59.

M. Arul Thevar made up for his disappointment in the KL Marathon by winning the men's Open in 21:37. He was followed by A. Munusamy and M. Arumugan with times of 22:01 and 21:15 respectively.

Results - MEN Open: 1. M. Arul Thevar 21:37, 2. A. Munusamy 22:01, 3. M. Arumugan 22:15; Junior Veteran: 1. M. Ramakrishnan 23:42, 2. G. Toiahlan 24:30, 3. R. Nancappan 25:02.

Senior Veteran: P. Balakrishnan 25:56, 2. Murugesu Thevar 27:37, 3. Edward Quire 27:50; Boys: 1. S. Kokilan 24:11, 2. Krishna Kumar 24:16, 3. Saiful Azahar 24:26.

WOMEN Open: 1. Yuan Yufang 26:29, 2. S. Devamani 27:03, 3. Suwaibah Mohamad Nasir 27:59; Veteran: 1. Sunita Godara (Ind) 29:50, 2. Moh Ah Mooi 31:37, 3. Agnes Tee 31:52; Girls: 1. M. Vally 28:49, 2. Wong Mew Choo 30:32, 3. S. Tinamalar 32:45.

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