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PM to firms: Support our quest for world beaters

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DATUK SERI Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday called on more companies to complement the Government's efforts by providing sponsorship to sports organisations.

The Prime Minister said such noble efforts would help the sports bodies produce world class athletes.

"It is my hope that more firms support these organisations, particularly those which have the potential to produce world class athletes," he said before receiving sponsorship from 10 companies under the Friends of Squash programme at his office in Putrajaya.

Under the programme, the companies would sponsor Malaysian squash players to international tournaments as well as for development programmes at junior levels.

Dr Mahathir said he was glad to note that many companies are supporting the Squash Rackets Association of Malaysia (SRAM) in its quest to produce world beaters.

"We know that Malaysians cannot excel in many sports ... maybe it is due to our small size. Whenever we have competitions such as the Olympic Games, the Commonwealth and even Sea Games, we rarely win many gold, silver or bronze medals," he said in jest.

However, Dr Mahathir said with more companies supporting sports organisations, efforts to produce more world class athletes would one day be realised.

The Prime Minister also advised athletes to be equally committed in their respective disciplines.

He said they could only taste success if they were willing to continuously train hard.

"They must do serious training if they want to achieve success ... they have to be focused. They cannot afford to be amateurish in their approach.

"They have to devote plenty of time and energy to train, train and train until they master the game," he said.

He said this was the only way they could bring home medals and make Malaysia a formidable force in the world of sport.

Dr Mahathir said the Government, on its part, will continue to provide financial assistance to sports organisations.

"We will continue to provide assistance but this may not be sufficient. That is why we want our friends from the corporate sector to help," he said.

Later, SRAM president Datuk Nik Mohamad Din said the association needed about RM1 million annually to send its players to compete in international tournaments and for junior development programmes.

He said although SRAM already receive RM500,000 from YTL Corporation Berhad annually since 1996 for its development programmes, the amount was insufficient.

"We are very transparent. We are willing to show our accounts to our sponsors on how the money is spent," he said, adding that SRAM had also appointed public auditors to audit its accounts.

Earlier in his speech, Nik Mohamad said SRAM were committed to producing world champions at senior level in the near future.

"We have produced two world junior champions - Ong Beng Hee in 1998 and Nicol David in 1999.

"We are currently the best in Asia, having won nearly all the titles at

junior and senior levels for men and women," he said.

The companies which made contributions to SRAM yesterday were Magnum Corporation Berhad, Formis (Malaysia) Sdn Bhd, Mulpha Sports Sdn Bhd, Business Focus Sdn Bhd, Asian Consulting Group Sdn Bhd, Avenue Assets Berhad, Tongkah Medivest Sdn Bhd, Cerah Daya Sdn Bhd, NMD Holdings Sdn Bhd and OPI Sdn Bhd.