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Sports-Mahathir

TRAIN HARDER TO BRING HONOURS TO COUNTRY, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

PUTRAJAYA, March 13 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has urged national athletes to train harder so that they can win medals for the country and enhance its name.

"I hope athletes will be more serious in undergoing training so that they can bring back more gold, silver and bronze medals to enhance Malaysia's name in the sports arena," the prime minister said.

"Spend more time to train, train and train until you succeed on the world stage," he said at a ceremony where 10 companies handed over contributions to the Squash Rackets Association of Malaysia (SRAM) here today.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysian athletes' failure at the international level might be due to their relatively small build but there were some sports in which they could be among the best.

"Fortunately, there are several sports in which we can be world champions. I believe we can be successful in squash," he said.

He hoped that the corporate sector would continue to support sports in which Malaysia has the potential to succeed because heavy expenses would be incurred in conducting thorough and long-term training.

"Government aid alone is definitely not enough, and it is important for corporate bodies to support sports in which we have the potential to be champions," he said.

SRAM president Datuk Nik Mohamed Din said it was the association's target to have a Malaysian as the world number one by the year 2006.

He said SRAM needed more than RM1 million a year to finance its programmes, including to unearth new talents.

Malaysia has dominated Asian squash and has produced junior world champions in Ong Beng Hee, who is ranked 13th in the world, and Nicol David.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir received RM500,000 from 10 companies under the "Partners in Sports" programme to help finance SRAM's activities.

-- BERNAMA

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