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Associations must work closely with Government

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RECENT focus given to the discussion of separating the Youth and Sports Ministry into two ministries has been overwhelming.

To some, like Larut Matang and Selama FA president Datuk Abdullah Hishan Hashim, times have changed and a lot of things need to be done to improve and elevate the standard of sports in the country. Hishan felt the responsibilities and area governing sports has grown bigger and in order to pace the development, separating the duties and functions of the Sports Minister from the Youth and Sports Ministry would be timely.

Nonetheless, there are those who reckon splitting the Sports and Youth Ministry into two separate ministries won't be the best formula in managing sports in Malaysia. Sport organisations leaders like Datuk Mokhzani Mahathir believes it is a difficult thing as most youth programmes involve sports, and the two functions are inter-related.

Sports governing in Malaysia is never easy, and the same goes to handling youth-related issues. Thus, the wisdom behind combining both Youth and Sports under one ministry must be truly understood before it is justifiable to split them.

The reality is, the two portfolios were always complimentary to each other. If the main concern behind the idea of splitting the Youth and Sports Ministry is to improve the performance of sports or to improve the quality in governing sports, than the focus should be on how sports organisations can fulfil their respective commitment in making Malaysia a sporting giant.

Governing sports in Malaysia was never easy, and effective management of sport organisations is the vital piece of puzzle missing from developing sports in Malaysia. Sadly, while the Government is sincerely and seriously pushing the agenda in improving the performance of sports by allocating millions of Ringgit to facilitate training programmes and sports infrastructures, the initiatives are frequently frustrated by internal politicking of sports organisations.

Developing sports in Malaysia is a collective responsibility between the ministry and sports bodies, and unless sports organisations are fully committed to tackling problems like internal politicking, the performance of sports in Malaysia will hardly improve even with the setting up of one or more Sports Ministries.

Youth, in the context of sports development, represents the significant link to ensuring the continuity of excellence. As described by OCM secretary Datuk Sieh Kok Chi, youth can't be separated from sports because it is an important educational tool. This argument represents the real substance of why there is a Youth and Sports Ministry instead of a Youth or a Sports Ministry. Youth is synonymous to sports, and it would peculiar if suddenly the two entities are split under the pretext of sports development.

It is a common principal in management that a centralised department should lead the functionality and management of resources, and taking into account the complexity of the youth and sports sectors in Malaysia, it is arguably best if the Ministry remains as it is to ensure continuity of youth and sports development in Malaysia.

Malaysia is right to place youth with sports development via various training programmes and foreign training stints. With all the resources, including federal funding, in place, a sudden change in administration

structure will definitely distract the implementation of long-term policies in youth and sports development.

The idea of establishing a joint sports management council between the Youth and Sports Ministry and the Education Ministry, is more pragmatic and a less complicated approach compared to separating the Youth and