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FAM needs you more, Sultan Ahmad

Lazarus Rokk; Jugjet Singh

FOOTBALL Association of Malaysia (FA) president Sultan Ahmad Shah (pic) became the the latest candidate for the Malaysian Hockey Federation (MHF) president on a day when Sultan Sharafuddin Idris Shah of Selangor declined nomination for the post.

The other candidate so far, is former BA of Malaysia president Tan Sri Elyas Omar who was nominated by Kuala Lumpur.

Sultan Ahmad, president of the Pahang HA, is in London right now, but he has given the go-ahead to Pahang HA vice-president C. Jeyaratnam to nominate him.

"I have received the green light to nominate Sultan Ahmad Shah who is an avid hockey fan, and I will send in the nomination tomorrow (today)," said Jeyaratnam.

But Sultan Ahmad, who already has his hands full with rebuilding soccer, should respectfully decline.

For, although Sultan Ahmad is capable of leading the MHF, he has yet to finish his job with the FAM - to put Malaysian soccer in the world class level.

And that job needs more urgency, especially since Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had expressed his disappointment over the poor standard of Malaysian soccer, not once, but twice.

The first time the PM talked about the declining standard of soccer in relation to South Korea and Japan whom we had beaten in the 70s and 80s, was in a Cabinet meeting last month.

And then last Friday, he took a nation by shock when he reiterated his disappointment, in of all forums, the Budget announcement that was telecast live on national television.

For a man who has not been known to be excited about soccer standards, and then to talk about its decline twice within a spell of one month, it must mean that even the PM is unhappy about our world ranking. Which is a poor 121, and that too a rung below Malta.

Which is why, Sultan Ahmad, who has already done well by helping FAM to be financially independent, and putting together a sound administrative structure, needs to focus on significantly improving Malaysia's world soccer ranking before he takes on anything new, or even handing over the FAM reins to his son Tengku Abdullah Sultan Ahmad Shah.

Sultan Ahmad, 71, marked the end of his tenure as the seventh president of the AFC on August 14 on a high note as he was bestowed the Fifa Order of Merit, the game's highest honour, in recognition of his positive contributions to soccer.

So far, according to MHF secretary, S. Satgunam only three of the 15 affiliates have submitted their nominations for the Oct 26 elections. Nominations close tomorrow.

But if the other 12 haven't made up their minds yet, perhaps now is the time to try something different and depart from the tradition of naming a member of the royalty or a politician, to lead sports associations.

Perhaps affiliates should try to persuade leading corporate figures to helm associations and revolutionise the concept of sports management and administration.

Hyundai chairman Chung Mong Joon did exactly that with the South Korea FA when he took over as president. He brought in his senior executives into the FA, and today they are ranked fourth in the world.

The concept of Sports Inc has proven successful the world over, so let's free ourselves from archaic mindsets, and jive to the new beat.