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Hishan: Split Youth from Sports Ministry

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LARUT Matang and Selama FA president Datuk Abdullah Hishan Hashim, in a bold and radical move to improve sports in the country, has appealed to the Government to separate the duties and functions of the Sports Minister from the Youth and Sports Ministry.

In other words, Hishan believes the time has come to have a minister solely responsible for sports.

While realising the proposal may come as a surprise and seen to be too drastic, Hishan firmly believes it is necessary as the sports scenario in the country has changed.

And it is time Malaysian sports officials and the government keep up with the changing times.

"I would like to appeal to our beloved Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and the Government to consider separating the two responsibilities - youth and sports," said Hishan when met at Balai Berita in Bangsar yesterday.

Hishan, on behalf of LSMFA, presented a cheque for RM5,000 to the two 16-year-olds who will be leaving for trials with English Premier League club Birmingham City.

Both players, Zaidi Samsuddin and Noor Amin Othman, were identified and selected from the Ken Barnes Soccer Skills programme.

"It is time to have a Sports Ministry by itself and a minister to run it," said Hishan.

"Times have changed and a lot of things need to be done to improve and elevate the standard of sports in the country.

"Sports today is being used to attract tourists. There is also high performance sports and sports for all. As such, the responsibilities and area governing sports has grown bigger," added Hishan.

Hishan, however, acknowledged that the proposal will come under severe criticism but said it was time to do something bold.

"And with due respect to the Sports Minister's comments, I feel that the time has come to limit the term of office bearers as well," said Hishan.

"Results can be taken into consideration but what if the leaders had inherited the players but have neglected to develop the sport at the grassroots?"

Sports Minister Datuk Hishammuddin Hussein, on Monday, said he was not in favour of limiting the term of office bearers in the respective sports associations.

He also said that results were the best way to judge the success and performance of an association and its leadership.

But Hishan believes it is imperative that sports associations and its leaders are judged by the development programmes implemented right down to school and district levels.

"What do we desire? Results, yes but more importantly, what we want is consistent results. We also need the districts and States to churn out a steady stream of talent for the respective national associations.

"If all this is in place, then we can say that the leader or leaders have done a good job," said Hishan.

Hishan, who has turned LMSFA from a debt-ridden club to a financially sound association, believes in leadership by example.

In fact, LMSFA has already incorporated the clause to limit the term of its office bearers, namely the president to two terms of two years.

And Hishan believes four years is enough time to develop the sport and put the programmes in place.

"If at all there is a need to retain the president, a clause can be added into the constitution. As long as two thirds of the majority in an extraordinary general meeting (EGM) agree, allow the president to stay on for a final third term.

"Or after a certain period is over, refer the case to the Sports Commissioner to decide if that leader should stay on, but for only another term.

"But after that, he or she has to go."

* The Ken Barnes Soccer Skills Programme is sponsored by the National Sports Council, Milo, Bata, Admiral, and F&N Coca Cola. The New Straits Times is the official newspaper.