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Sports-Badminton (Indra)

RUNNERS-UP SPOT NOT GOOD ENOUGH, SAYS INDRA

By: Hamdan Saaid

GUANGZHOU, May 20 (Bernama) -- Indra Gunawan, who had won the Thomas Cup three times during his coaching stint with Indonesia, is not happy with the second spot finish by Malaysia in the 2002 Thomas Finals which concluded yesterday.

He said Malaysia had a glorious opportunity to regain the coveted trophy after Lee Tsuen Seng defeated Taufik Hidayat in the second singles to give Malaysia a 2-1 lead.

"To me, becoming runners-up is not good enough.

"We missed a golden opportunity. The Indonesian players themselves admitted that after being 1-2 down, they thought their chances of winning were only 25-75," he said.

Indra said the Indonesians looked gloom following Taufik's defeat but they regained their spirit after Halim Haryanto/Trikus Haryanto beat Choong Tan Fook/Lee Wan Wah to level the score 2-2.

The 55-year-old coach led Indonesia to Thomas Cup triumphs in 1994 (Jakarta), 1996 and 1998 (both played in Hong Kong).

Indra began training the national squad early last year and his two-year contract with the Badminton Association of Malaysia (BAM) and National Sports Council (NSC) expires this December.

Asked on the possibility that he may return to Indonesia after his contract ended, Indra said he had yet to think about it as he wanted to focus on his tasks with the Malaysian squad.

However Indra indicated that if such scenario happened, then he would not be directly involved in training and preferred to act as adviser or coaching director.

"I am getting old. I may no longer be able to withstand all these pressures. If I stay back in the shadows may be I will not be under so much pressure," he said.

Indra also said if Malaysia had won the Thomas Cup, he had dreamt of applying for permanent resident's status and took pictures with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and wife Datin Seri Dr Hasmah Mohd Ali as well as his favourite singer Siti Nurhaliza.

"But all of these (dreams) were dashed. If we have (win) the Cup, then can take photographs with them," he said repeatedly.

-- BERNAMA

HRS HRS ZUL