

15/11/2002

Should sports be on its own?

THE call for sports to be accorded its own ministry - detached from its current partner, youth - met with mixed reactions.

While Olympic Council of Malaysia (OCM) president Tan Sri Tunku Imran Tuanku Ja'afar, and Malaysian Hockey Federation deputy president Tan Sri P. Alagendra support the idea, Acting President of the Squash Racquets of Malaysia Datuk Mokhzani Mahathir, and OCM secretary Datuk Sieh Kok Chi believe sports and youth are inseparable components.

The idea of separating youth from sports was fuelled by Larut Matang and Selama FA president Datuk Abdullah Hishan Hashim to improve sports in the country.

Hishan had appealed to the Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and the Government to consider separating the two responsibilities as the sports scenario in the country has changed and he felt it is time Malaysian sports officials and the government keep up with the times.

Said Mokhzani: "To me trying to separate the two is difficult as most youth programmes involve sports."

Sports, like entertainment, he opines are the equalising factors for youth.

"The two functions are inter-mingled...invariably any youth programme will have sports.

"If there is one component that can unify youth it's sports."

Said Sieh: "You can't separate sports from youth because it is an important educational tool.

"Sports inculcates values, it teaches you about winning and not winning, fighting spirit and others."

He believes the idea is to bring sports to the schools, to start them young, though not all youths are into sports.

"Besides elite sports, which like most countries we have the National Sports Council to handle that area, there are other areas to look at like sports development, fun sports, age group sports and mass sports or sports for all.

"At the end of the day, policies and objectives will be drawn but the most important area is implementation. The most effective way of achieving the objectives should be employed."

However Tunku Imran suggested a new partnership for the Sports Ministry - the Education Ministry.

"It is a political issue but for the sake of sports, I feel that it would be better to divorce sports from youth and marry it with education. It is an idea that I have been propagating for the last 10 years and hope that with the support from all, it can be realised soon," said Tunku Imran.

Alagendra was also of the same opinion.

"Schools are the foundation for all activities, be it education, moral or sports. So I feel that it is a good idea to combine sports with education so that sports will get the right emphasis," said Alagendra.

Hockey in schools is almost non-existent as veteran teachers responsible for the development of the sport have all retired and in their place, teachers with little or no experience have been drafted to develop hockey.

Tunku Imran was of the opinion that since the Education Ministry has the biggest number of playing fields, and a large number of teachers who can be trained to become specialists in selected sports, it would serve the

country better if the two ministries combine their resources.

"Teachers can be mobilised in a big way once the two ministries are married. Teacher training colleges can start having specialised courses and produce coaches who can then take sports like hockey, soccer, squash and bowling to the next level.

"Sports Science degree holders can also play a vital part once they are roped into the programme.

"Once the two ministries are combined, I envision a big boom for grassroots development in the country, and we can achieve better results at major sporting events like the Asian Games and the Olympics in the near future.

"Schools have all the facilities available at their doorstep, it is just a matter of having a concerted effort to start development in a big way," said Tunku Imran.

So what will happen to the youth if sports is taken out of it?

"Maybe the youth section can then combine with the culture (and tourism) ministry," suggested Alagendra.