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Bring in the specialists, Minister, not the GPs

Lazarus Rokk

AS our dynamic Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad eloquently explains that Vision 2020 and beyond is a Malaysian dream that needs the cumulative efforts of an entire nation, we are still very much governed by age-old reserves, and mindsets moulded on confined and narrow thoughts.

And in these crevices of our confined minds, we have shown little flexibility to be able to adapt to change, and confront new challenges with that kind of self-belief that the PM has tried to inculcate in all Malaysians.

These last few weeks, we have seen how that narrow, and confined mindset still dictating the thought patterns of some of our leading sports administrators.

In the case of professional shuttler, Ong Ewe Hock, the BA of Malaysia's Disciplinary Board had recommended suspension from competitions, when a fine, of say RM5,000, would have been the more sensible penalty for snubbing the inquiry.

That way he would have literally paid the price for his disrespect, without having to sacrifice his main source of income. In mitigation, Ong's so-called "offence" certainly didn't warrant a punishment that would end his playing career.

But as confined and narrow mindsets go, you can't get any more constricted than the thoughts that had influenced the decision to pick some of the members of the Sports Advisory Panel - seemingly the think-tank for Sports Minister, Datuk Hishammuddin Hussein.

When the objective of this panel is to advise Hishammuddin on sports policies, sports-related issues, and provide new ideas on improving the quality of Malaysian sport, wouldn't the Minister want to surround himself with personalities armed with great knowledge and experience?

No one will argue with the appointments of Olympic Council of Malaysia president Tunku Imran Tuanku Ja'afar, his deputy Datuk Dr Mani Jegathesan, or secretary-general Datuk Sieh Kok Chi. In their respective fields, they have been both athletes and administrators...they have seen it all.

Sports Commissioner, Datuk Zabri Min by virtue of his designation, has every reason to be in the panel, as its secretary.

But even as much as liberal thinking will allow me, logic is still a vague element that diminishes rapidly as you scroll through the names of the other candidates.

While it's no fault of theirs for being picked, you tend to question the judgement and wisdom of those who had named former Kuala Lumpur Mayor Tan Sri Kamaruzzaman Shariff as chairman, corporate figures Tan Sri Datuk Amar Hamid Bugo, Datuk Dr Mohd Noor Ismail, Director of Broadcasting Datuk Ir. Ali Musa Sulaiman, Permanent Secretary to the Ministry of Youth & Sports Datuk Noni J. Said and sportscaster Shaukei Kahar, as its members.

Wouldn't it have been more prudent, let alone sensible, to appoint to this panel, an expert in every component of sports?

It was quite evident from the shape of things that had governed these decisions, that they had not made provisions for an expert in school sports, sports science, physical education, coaching, and even sports marketing and communication.

The problem in our management of sports, is that we pay scant attention to the concept of specialisation. We don't employ specialists to get the job done. Sadly in our sports equation, we are flooded with "general

practioners" who masquerade as specialists.

Take the Sports Ministry, for instance, how many of those officers who advise the Minister on sports policies, are experts in the field...who know what they are talking about?

It's frightening to think that it's these general practioners who actually have a bigger say in our sports policies.

Bring in the experts, Minister.

Malaysian sport has suffered so much damage that only the specialists can fix it. Not the pretenders.