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Hafiz must stop celebrating and start training

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TIME and tide wait for no man and the sooner All-England champion Hafiz Hashim realises this, the better his chances will be at the World Championships in May.

The celebrations after his triumph in Birmingham are not over yet for Hafiz who is still in Kota Baru with his family and has yet to resume training with the national team at the Juara Stadium.

Hafiz, 21, became the first Malaysian singles player to win the All-England title since Tan Aik Huang in 1966 and returned to Kuala Lumpur last Tuesday.

Despite the call by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad that Hafiz should not be overly pampered with perks, Hafiz has been receiving undivided attention from several quarters who are keeping his daily schedules tight.

National coach Misbun Sidek and the players who competed in the Swiss Open will rejoin training today while Hafiz's presence is still in the dark.

Misbun was unavailable for comment but assistant coach Rashid Sidek said although Hafiz has missed training for a week, he should be going through light training in Kota Baru.

"I think he is unable to attend training as there could be further functions in Kota Baru. He should have informed Misbun about the situation," said Rashid at Juara Stadium yesterday.

"We will have a clearer picture about Hafiz once Misbun returns to conduct training tomorrow (today).

"I don't think Hafiz's fitness will be affected as he should be going through some form of training in Kota Baru but his strokes will suffer a little bit. It will also take a couple of weeks before he gains his fitness."

Hafiz has already been guaranteed RM10,000 from the BA of Malaysia (BAM) while the Kelantan State Government rewarded him with RM5,000 and car manufacturers Proton, reportedly, will be presenting him with one of its latest models. This is besides the US\$10,000 (RM38,000) prize money he won in Birmingham.

Although the perks received by Hafiz are nothing compared to what was received by the members of the 1992 Thomas Cup squad, the over-celebration could affect the shuttler's focus in training.

Hafiz is one player who loses his concentration easily and that was the case when he won the Commonwealth Games gold medal in Manchester last year.

He failed to produce any outstanding results after that and received a stern warning from Misbun, who was even willing to sack him from Nusa Mahsuri if he didn't buck up.

Hafiz responded well and after winning the All-England title, the shuttler immediately set his sights on winning the world championships in May and the Athens Olympics gold next year.

The world championships is just two months away and if Hafiz wants to realise his dreams, he should stop celebrating and return to training as soon as possible because time is something he does not have.