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Khalid: Yes to Cabinet directive

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MALAYSIAN Amateur Athletics Union (MAAU) president Datuk Khalid Yunus yesterday joined the growing call for a Cabinet directive to deploy more ministries to help arrest the general decline in the standard of Malaysian sport.

Khalid, who is also the deputy minister for Entrepreneur Development, believes only a Cabinet directive will prompt the Education, Defence, Housing and Local Government ministries, to play their part in the development of sports.

But he suggested that the Sports Ministry should be the main component in the equation, and it should outline specific responsibilities for the other ministries concerned to enable a more coordinated effort to develop sports.

The call for a Cabinet directive was mooted by Olympic Council of Malaysia president Tunku Imran Tuanku Ja'afar in a Nasi Bungkus dialogue session with The New Straits Times last Thursday.

"It may be his (Tunku Imran) personal view, but the proposal has my support," said Khalid when contacted in Bahau yesterday.

"Sports has become complex and sophisticated and everybody has to contribute. And as long as we don't have an integrated approach to develop sports, it is going to be difficult.

"It is difficult for outsiders to intervene in the policies of other ministries or agencies. But if it is a Cabinet directive, there will be greater awareness and a more concerted effort."

Tunku Imran believes that if Malaysia considers sports as a serious business, then it is imperative for Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad or his Cabinet to issue a directive to all the relevant ministries to accept it as part of their mandate.

"As far as athletics is concerned, a Cabinet directive will also ensure more effort is put in to revive the MAKSAK (Malaysian Government Servants Welfare and Sports Council) athletics meet," added Khalid.

"It used to be one of the premier athletics competitions in the country and many talented athletes were identified through this championships.

"And the directive can be the catalyst to get the meet going again."

But to ensure a coordinated effort, Khalid urged the Sports Ministry to draw up guidelines on the responsibilities that each ministry can undertake as part of its efforts.

"For instance, if it is the Defence Ministry, there is the Armed Forces and they have tremendous potential, and I believe it is not only in athletics.

"As for the Housing and Local Government Ministry, facilities is one area they can help. Then you have the Royal Malaysian Police, Fire Services and many other uniform units that can form strong teams in various sports."

Khalid also urged the relevant local municipalities to get into the act as well as there are many districts in the country which have soccer fields, but don't have proper running tracks.

"Everybody says you must go back to the grassroots, but how do we get them to be involved when there aren't enough facilities for it (athletics)," asked Khalid.

"Maybe it is time to ensure every district has a proper running track. In fact, at this point in time, a majority of the districts still hold

their athletics championships on grass tracks.

"A Cabinet directive will show the people that the Government is motivated and encouraging sports, and hopefully this will spur more youth to take up sports and form sport clubs as well."

And Khalid, a member of the Cabinet himself, is hoping for that directive to happen.