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Mazlan: Dr Mahathir never failed to inspire

Glen Peters

NATIONAL Sports Council (NSC) director-general Datuk Mazlan Ahmad said it is a misconception that Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad disliked sports, instead he paid tribute to the former Prime Minister as a man who instilled a belief in athletes and sports officials alike that Malaysians can excel at the Asian and world stage.

Mazlan reminisced on Dr Mahathir's involvement in the successful staging of the 1998 Commonwealth Games in Kuala Lumpur, saying his hands-on approach in ensuring the completion of the National Sports Complex in Bukit Jalil and the country's haul of 10 gold medals gave local athletes and sports officials a confidence that Malaysians are capable of success beyond the region.

Mazlan also said whenever Dr Mahathir met the local athletes, usually for flag handing over ceremonies like the 2001 KL Sea Games, he always stressed on the importance of discipline and practice in order to master your chosen field or sport.

"To me personally, he is a leader who can inspire you, one who can make you confident of doing your job. I personally feel that very much because the greatest task entrusted on me and the NSC was to prepare the Malaysian contingent which could compete with the other Commonwealth countries, but with him around, you felt that anything could be done," said Mazlan in Bukit Jalil yesterday.

Mazlan said Dr Mahathir, as chairman of the 1998 Commonwealth Games council, frequently visited the National Sports Council to ensure the work was completed on time.

"Dr Mahathir was the most active compared to all in the council, he visited the site most frequently and after he was briefed, he would ask questions on the progress and that showed how concerned he was for the project, and also he showed us that we can host an event as big as the Commonwealth Games successfully."

"Part of his legacy to sports is the National Sports Complex, but he has left something much bigger behind.

"He motivates you to become a confident Malaysian. I feel after the 1998 Commonwealth Games we have become more confident, among sports officials and athletes that we can organise the tournament which is regarded as one of the best ever and also the athletes can achieve excellence at a bigger stage."

Mazlan said Malaysia finished fourth in the 1998 Commonwealth Games and this has spurred the country to aim for excellence in the Asian and world stage in accordance with the Eighth Malaysia Plan and the OPP3 (Third Outline Perspective Plan 2001-2010).

"Now, in line with the OPP3 and the Eighth Malaysia Plan the country is looking at producing world class athletes, no more just at the Sea Games level. That is our next direction, Asian and world class."