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Mulpha, Country View get generous

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AS far as the SRA of Malaysia (SRAM) is concerned, its financial woes are over with the signing of a major sponsorship deal with Mulpha and Country View worth RM3.4 million, which runs until 2006, under the Taja Gemilang (Excellence Sponsorship) project launched by the Sports Ministry yesterday.

SRAM has been depending on its Rakan Muda (Partner in Sports) partners YTL Corporation's funding, about RM500,000 a year since 1996, to run its development and elite training programmes.

The association also regularly receives financial aid from the National Sports Council (NSC) when they are in dire straits.

Lack of funding has often deprived the juniors the chance to compete abroad regularly but with the support offered by Mulpha, distributors of Head sports equipment, and Johor-based Country View, SRAM's troubles are as good as over.

Mulpha's four-year deal is worth RM2.5 million (RM625,000 a year) and will be utilised to set up regional squash academies and organising international squash tournaments.

Country View signed a three-year deal worth RM900,000 (RM300,000 annually), to ease SRAM's burden of sending its players, especially the professionals, for international tournaments.

This leaves SRAM with sufficient funding of close to RM1.4 million this year to run its annual activities.

SRAM president Datuk Mokhzani Mahathir said that the sponsorship deal is the boost they were looking out for in order to achieve their goal of producing world champions in senior and junior levels by 2006.

"The sponsorship deal is a huge boost for SRAM as our goal is to produce potential world champions by 2006," said Mokhzani.

"We have restructured our elite and development programmes. The players have got their work cut out for them.

"YTL has been contributing to our development since 1996 and Mulpha and Country View's support will help us tremendously to achieve our objectives."

Mulpha carried out its pledge even before the contract was signed when it contributed RM200,000 to the setting up of the Penang Squash Academy which was launched on Saturday. The company is also expected to fund the Pahang Squash Academy in Kuantan which is expected to be launched in June.

Squash was the first sport to be accorded the benefits under the new programme and six other sports are in line to receive new sponsors.

Karate will be the second sport to receive funding under Taja Gemilang in March.