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Penang centre first of many planned across the nation

Lee Keng Fatt

THE setting up of the squash academy at the Penang International Squash Centre in Bukit Dumbar will be the start of more centres the Squash Racquets Association of Malaysia (SRAM) plans to have over the next three years.

The academy is geared towards introducing a programme which is tailored towards the development of squash at grassroots level.

SRAM president Datuk Mokhzani Mahathir said the association sees the need to set up more of these academies and hence the plan to introduce it throughout the country.

The State SRAM is looking at after Penang, Mokhzani disclosed, is Pahang.

Talks with the Pahang Sports Council are in progress and SRAM is confident of convincing them to set one up in the State.

"There is a piece of land which can be developed and we are working closely with the Sports Council to establish the academy," Mokhzani said.

SRAM is also working towards setting up academies in Selangor, the Federal Territory, Malacca, Negri Sembiland and Sarawak.

"Our target is to have at least five academies over the next three years," Mokhzani said at the launch of the Penang academy at the Penang International Squash Centre in Bukit Dumbar by Penang Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon's representative, Teng Chang Yeow.

Also present were Penang SRA president Oh Siong Tit, Mulpha Head director Denis Low and Penang Sports Council director Lee Hang Son. Low pledged a contribution of RM600,000 for the Penang academy over a three-year period.

SRAP will also receive RM30,000 annually from the Penang Sports Council towards the setting up and running of the office.

Meanwhile, Oh said the academy was formed to coordinate a proper structure to the programme that the association was currently running.

"This includes a systematic approach and proper planning towards training to create a centre for squash players," said Oh, who added that the State's junior programmes have been running for more than 10 years.

"When we started, we had about 10 players but now the number has exceeded 140 and this is expected to grow," he added.