

# Talent identification programmes should get more funding

**MALAYSIA** should boost funding for talent identification programmes (TID) if it is really serious about churning out new talent for the future.

That is the view of retired sports science specialist Dr Ahmad Naim Ismail on how Malaysia can improve the talent development process in the country.

Last week, Youth and Sports Minister Hannah Yeoh stated her preference for redirecting funds towards boosting talent production in the sporting ecosystem, rather than hosting expensive international competitions.

Malaysia recently turned down an offer from the Commonwealth Games Federation (CGF) to step in as replacement hosts for the 2026 Commonwealth Games.

“I agree with the minister, considering the current economic situation,” said Naim.

“It is not a suitable time to be hosting expensive competitions.

“However, development must always continue. Yet, adequate funding is essential to conduct development initiatives.

“The TID programme must be comprehensive, involving athletes from all schools nationwide.

“Conducting TID tests on athletes requires money, which has been a stumbling block.

“The important element in development is TID. We already have a TID programme in place. However, it is not comprehensive enough.

“This is especially important

for athletes approaching 18 years of age — those entering university level — as they are developing physiologically.

“To become the best in the world, you should always compete against the best. Experience is not something you can teach.

“Take Japan and South Korea, for example. They already have many football players in top European leagues, thanks to their TID system.

“We need to achieve something similar if we want to be successful at a high level.”

At a regional level, Naim used the 2017 Kuala Lumpur Sea Games gold medal-winning rugby team as an example of what athlete development progression should look like.

“These players were identified at the school level and placed at the Tunku Mahkota Ismail Sports School, where they were taught the fundamentals of the game,” he said.

“They were then placed at Universiti Putra Malaysia, which is the Rugby Centre of Excellence, and were given international exposure.

“These players, strengthened by a few players from other teams, were then able to win Malaysia's first-ever gold medal in rugby at the Sea Games.”

Naim was an associate professor of sports science at Universiti Teknologi Mara and was also a former Malaysia Rugby high-performance director.

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