



'It is all about man-management'

RESPONSIBILITY: Tan Sri Mohamed Al Amin Abdul Majid was very much a hands on chef-de-mission at the Rio Games. Al Amin played several roles — among them mentor, adviser, manager and even a fatherly figure — as he and his team did everything possible to ensure the national athletes had the best in Rio de Janeiro. Malaysians would have seen Al Amin cheering on the national athletes from the

stands but he was also very visible behind the scenes as he was equally quick in consoling as well as congratulating. His efforts paid off as Malaysia returned with four silver and one bronze, the nation's best ever haul at the Olympics. The BA of Malaysia acting president shares his experiences and offers suggestions on the way forward for sports with A Jalil Hamid and Vijesh Rai

Q: Tan Sri, congratulations on Malaysia's excellent outing in the Rio Olympics. Can you share with us your first reaction when you were informed that you would be the chef-de-mission (CDM).

A: I received a call from KJ (Youth and Sports Minister Khairy Jamaluddin), saying that I was being proposed as the CDM. I told KJ to give me 15 to 20 minutes as I had to ask my wife. That was actually a joke but in actual fact, I had to check as the CDM appointment was never in my plan.

I was surprised when my wife said I should accept as I have been in sports for so long. She said "Maybe

this is your highlight" as I have been saying that I wanted to retire from sports.

Then, my responsibilities dawned upon me. I had decided to accept the post and I told myself that I would treat it as a short stint but with full commitment.

I made an appointment to see Tan Sri M. Jegathesan, a former athlete and sports administrator, to share his experiences. I needed to know the critical areas — meaning the sports and non-sports areas.

And then I met Tun Ahmad Sarji Abdul Hamid, Malaysia's CDM to the 2012 London Olympics.

After that, I had some ideas on

what was my role. I was not worried but I knew the responsibility of delivery was also very big on my shoulders although I was not involved in the preparation. However, you know that at the end of the day, you have to be the one to answer.

Q: What would you say is the role of the CDM?

A: The role of the CDM is to ensure everything is prepared logistically. The athletes must not have anything to worry about. The CDM

must protect the athletes, work with the team managers and coaches, ensure there is team harmony. It is all about man-management.

I also feel that any CDM should be with a technical background in sports as it makes it easier to work with everyone.

When I was appointed as CDM, it was based on badminton being a sport that contributes medals to Malaysia and that helped me in my role as the

CDM.



Shuttler Chan Peng Soon, after he lost (the mixed doubles final), hugged me and hung his medal around my neck. I was really touched as this showed the relationship I had with him.

(Diver Cheong) Jun Hoong, after the 3m springboard synchronised (where Malaysia missed out on a medal after mistakes were committed in the final two dives), was feeling down. I met all the girls. Advised them that tomorrow was another day and Jun Hoong was very happy as she needed comforting and she then performed better in the 10m platform synchronised (with Pandelela Rinong, winning silver). I am not taking credit but it is very important to build a relationship with the athletes.

Q: When Singapore won gold for swimming, did it add more pressure on you?

A: One thing I must admit is that I was so focused on our contingent, that I wasn't looking out to see how others were doing. It was only later that I realised that (Joseph) Schooling had won, had beaten (Michael) Phelps, which I thought was quite phenomenal.

It didn't put pressure but people started to talk about the other Asean brothers getting medals. I was there when Vietnam got the shooting gold. Then, Thailand got the weightlifting gold, but based on our projection, our gold would only come on Aug 20 through Datuk Lee Chong Wei.

But then, the mixed doubles went to the final, the men's doubles went to the final and that gave us more options for gold.

On that note, I would like to thank the National Sports Council, the national Sports Institute, the team managers and all the support staff for they made my job easier with their assistance and hard work.

Q: How nervous were you about winning medals?

A: The first four days went by without a medal and I have to admit that



Datuk Lee Chong Wei (holding the Malaysian flag) and Tan Sri Mohamed Al Amin Abdul Majid leading the way at the opening of the Rio Olympics last month. Pic by Rosli Rahmat

when we won the diving silver, it was a relief.

We had done our projections and I had looked at all the sports and looked at their ranking and records.

Badminton had the ranking and records. Diving too, but while Pandelela won in the 10m platform individual in London, the team officials said we had a better chance in the synchronised events in Rio and they were proven right.

My expectation for gold, as mentioned earlier, was through Chong Wei, but the men's doubles and mixed doubles performed above expectations.

This, I must say, is because they were able to cope with the pressure. I advised the mixed pair (Peng Soon and Goh Liu Ying) to play as underdogs as that is what they were. We have seen how pressured the shuttlers can be when they play in major events for Malaysia and we just diverted it to positive pressure.

It was the same with the men's doubles (Goh V Shem and Tan Wee Kiong). We knew they feared playing

the Koreans (Lee Yong Dae and Yoo Yeong Seong) but told them that the Koreans were under even more pressure. Our pair seized the moment and almost went all the way.

Q: Your advice to associations for Tokyo 2020?

A: A good association should have a good programme. Have the right people to set the programme. You must target the Olympics. It involves both private and government funding but associations must look for their own sponsors. If they do, their programmes can run as they can send their athletes abroad for competitions without having to worry about government funding.

Currently, we have associations which don't send their athletes abroad if they do not get funds from the government and this shouldn't be the case.

Q: Should Malaysia focus on a specific number of sports in search of Olympic glory?

A: Yes. I think that is something that

should be considered. The Olympic Council of Malaysia (OCM) should have a master plan and identify the sports that we should focus on.

OCM must link up with the government and preparations should be over two Olympic cycles to ensure continuity.

I believe we have a great chance to excel in, other than our traditional sports, shooting. We need to identify several others and focus on them.

Q: Your biggest regret in Rio?

A: How do you define success? Is it winning five medals instead of one gold? Is it the numbers or is it the colour? Unfortunately, the colour determines the ranking and if you have one gold, your place in the tally improves.

However, in terms of 32 athletes, we won five medals so that is an achievement but we must continue to build on this.

We must identify athletes for the 2020 Games now and start working to ensure that what was achieved in Rio was just the start.



Malaysian Olympians and Tan Sri Mohamed Al Amin Abdul Majid being greeted by a cheering crowd at the National Day parade in Dataran Merdeka. Pic by Ghazali Kori

INFOGRAPHIC: NST

NAME: TAN SRI DR MOHAMED AL AMIN ABDUL MAJID

DATE OF BIRTH: 20TH SEPTEMBER 1955

ACADEMIC:

- B.Sc. in Civil Engineering, University of Aston, Birmingham, United Kingdom.
- Doctor of Science Honoris Causa, Aston University, United Kingdom
- Corporate member of the Institute of Engineering Malaysia (IEM)

APPOINTMENTS:

- Board member, Perak Sports Council (1998 to 1999)
- Board member, National Sports Council (2001 to 2005)
- Board member, National Sports Council (reappointed since March 2010)

SPORTS:

- President, Perak Badminton Association (since 1994)
- Vice-president, Badminton Asia Confederation (2011 - 2015)
- Acting president, Badminton Association Malaysia (since 2015)

GOVERNMENT AGENCIES:

- Chairman, SME Corporation Malaysia (since Oct 2006)
- Council member, National Information Technology Council (since Oct 2010)

NGOS:

- President, Aston University Alumni Association of Malaysia (since 2007)
- Council member, Malaysia China Business Council (since 2009)

Conferred "Panglima Setia Mahkota (PSM)" award by Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Abdul Halim Mu'adzam Shah, which carries the title Tan Sri.