

Unforgettable

Tunku Imran recalls 'awful' 2000 event as he steps down as OCM president

By TAN MING WAI

SERDANG: Tunku Tan Sri Imran Tuanku Ja'afar will step down as president of the Olympic Council of Malaysia (OCM) after 20 long years at the helm.

The 70-year-old Negri Sembilan prince, who had given so much time and effort to Malaysian sports, struggled to give an answer when asked about which accomplishment he cherishes most during his tenure at OCM.

There was, however, one moment he vividly remembers well. And that was Malaysia's failed bid to host the 2006 Asian Games.

In November 2000, Tunku Imran was left devastated when Qatar's Doha pipped Malaysia to the host job despite being the favourite during the Olympic Council of Asia general assembly in Pusan, South Korea.

Tunku Imran described the event as "awful".

"Following a successful Commonwealth Games (in 1998) held in Kuala Lumpur, we decided to bid for the Asian Games. We went to Busan and we lost to Qatar," Tunku Imran recalled the moment when addressing the participants of the University Putra Malaysia (UPM) Sports Academy Distinguished Lecture Series in UPM yesterday.

"We were easily the frontrunners and everyone thought we should have won (the bid).

"I was in tears and it was the first time I was caught crying in public. The picture made the front page of newspapers. It was an awful incident."

Tunku Imran, who has been in power since taking over from the late Tan Sri Hamzah Abu Samah in 1998, is not seeking re-election after serving nine straight terms.

And it paved the way for his deputy Datuk Seri Norza Zakaria to usher in a new era. Norza won the seat uncontested when nomination closed on April 24.

National Silat Federation (Pesaka) secretary Datuk Megat Zulkarnain Omar Din will be in a direct fight for the deputy president's post against National Sports Institute (NSI) chairman Datuk Seri Azim Zabidi.

However, the focus will be on today's two-way fight for the secretary-general's post between



It's time to go: Tunku Tan Sri Imran Tuanku Ja'afar addressing the participants of the University Putra Malaysia (UPM) Sports Academy Distinguished Lecture Series yesterday. — RAJA FAISAL HISHAN/The Star

incumbent Datuk Low Beng Choo and vice-president Datuk Nazifuddin Mohd Najib.

Tunku Imran has urged the new office bearers to get behind Norza and stay united.

"Once you're nominated or elected, you become part of the team. You might be from a different camp initially but once you're on, you're on," he said.

"You're all in the boat together, so you have to sink or swim together."

Asked if he has any "unfinished business" that he wants his successor to continue doing, he said: "I think they need to continue trying to streamline the management, trying to establish a more corporate style of running things, making more policies and also monitoring the board."