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Foreign referees set to elevate MHL officiating standards

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KUALA LUMPUR: The Malaysian Hockey League (MHL) will feature umpires from across Asia this season as part of a concerted push to elevate officiating standards.

The new season will begin with the Charity Shield match between Tenaga Nasional Berhad (TNB) and Terengganu Hockey Team (THT) at the Batu Burok Stadium in Kuala Terengganu on April 11.

Malaysian Hockey Confederation (MHC) competitions committee chairman Datuk Seri Anil Jeet Singh said the collaboration with the Asian Hockey Federation (AHF) would see foreign referees joining a pool of 50 officials.

THE TEAMS

Men: Terengganu, Tenaga Nasional, Maybank, UiTM, TNB Thunderbolts, Armed Forces, Pahang Young Elephants (debutants), Territory Stingers (Australia) and Liaoning (China).

Women: Negri Sembilan, Uniten, Malaysian University, Territory Stingers (Australia) and debutants from Terengganu, Pahang and Perak.

“This is part of our effort to improve the quality of officiating in the MHL,” said Anil during the league briefing at the National Hockey Stadium yesterday.

“By bringing in umpires from other Asian countries, our local umpires will be exposed to higher standards and can

be assessed for international credentials.”

Anil has reminded team officials to maintain discipline throughout the competition.

“We want a competitive but controlled environment. Team managers must ensure their players and staff uphold professionalism to avoid unnecessary incidents,” he said.

The league will be played without a video referral system at this stage, but will implement gender-neutral officiating, with both male and female umpires assigned across matches.

Anil added that the presence of foreign players and guest teams would

further raise the competition level.

Last year's treble winners Terengganu have signed players from India (Dilraj Singh) and South Africa (Samkelo Mvimbi and Craig Keenan), Maybank have brought in Indonesian international Fathur Rohman, while Tenaga have retained their South Korean penalty corner ace Jang Jong-hyun.

Negri Sembilan's women's team have recruited two Indians - Jyoti Chhantri and Vandana Katariya.

A total of 103 matches will be played this season on a home-and-away format, with 78 fixtures in the men's competition. The top four in the league will advance to the TNB Cup.