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ENERGISING MALAYSIAN HOCKEY

TNB's commitment to hockey development a driving force behind Malaysia's success

NATIONAL utility company Tenaga Nasional Bhd (TNB) has seamlessly integrated its passion for sports, particularly hockey, into its corporate social responsibility initiatives.

Since the 1970s, TNB has been synonymous with the sport, leaving an indelible mark on the growth of hockey in Malaysia – including producing many world-class national players.

Beyond the domains of energy, TNB has actively pursued environmental, social and governance (ESG) practices, emphasising the vital role of sports in fostering a harmonious and united society.

With these aspirations, TNB allocates its resources to promote hockey – enabling youths to realise their potential, fostering sports development, and nurturing role models who inspire unity and excellence while elevating the standards of the sport.

Nurturing talent

TNB's commitment to hockey development goes beyond mere sponsorship.

As the main sponsor of the national hockey league since 2006, TNB has been a driving force in bringing together local talents – ensuring the vitality of the country's hockey scene, even in challenging times.

With a total contribution of RM30mil since 2015, TNB's financial backing has significantly propelled the hockey development programme.

"TNB is dedicated to fostering the growth of junior hockey players – to nurture national-level talent," says TNB chief global business solutions officer Datuk Ahmad Hushairi Ibrahim.

He explains that the company firmly believes in the transformative power of sports to create positive impacts and unite communities.

He emphasises that the true power of sports is not just in reaching numbers, but genuinely connecting with people around their passions.

"TNB is proud to be partnered with Malaysia Hockey Confederation and join them in their journey to elevate Malaysian hockey at all levels.

"As a company committed to energising Malaysia, we share the same mission towards a sustained and continuous development of the sport – in line with their vision to consistently triumph at the world stage.

"Hockey is one of the most popular and accessible sports in the country and globally. The partnership is an excellent opportunity for us to promote TNB's brand at various national and international tournaments."

TNB Thunderbolts

Through the years, TNB has evolved into more than just an employer of players, as the company motivates players to pursue the sport seriously and acts as a catalyst for their dedication to the game.

At the heart of TNB's hockey initiatives lies the TNB Thunderbolts programme, which is aimed at developing and nurturing high-potential youth hockey players – between the ages of 13 and 17 – to become future stars in the game.

Established in 2006 by former national hockey player and



With a total contribution of RM30mil since 2015, TNB's financial backing has significantly propelled the hockey development programme, with a total of 17 senior national players coming from the TNB Thunderbolts programme.



"TNB is dedicated to fostering the growth of junior hockey players, aiming to nurture national-level talent," says Ahmad Hushairi.

back in the day. The game has changed so much over the years, and other nations have developed rapidly since the time I was playing," he says.

"When I was playing, we used to beat countries like Belgium all the time, but now, they are world and Olympic champions, and are number one in the world."

While he was not selected to be part of the Olympic Qualifiers 2024 squad this time around, TNB hockey team captain Syed Mohamad Syafiq Syed Cholan believes that his national teammates have a decent chance of qualifying for the summer Olympics.

A total of 10 TNB players were chosen to be part of the Olympic Qualifiers 2024 squad.

"Previously, when I played in the qualifiers in 2019, it was a different format to what it is now. During that time, there were two legs for each match, whereas now there is only one game to be played against each team," he says.

"This new format has a clear path for the national team to qualify for the Olympic games in Paris. My gut tells me that they have a really good chance of qualifying if they prepare well."

His TNB teammate Muhammad Aminudin Mohd Zain, better known as "Pोकik", shares that if the national team plays to their strengths, they have the ability to outclass any opponent on their day.

"From what our TNB teammates have told me, they are focusing on their fitness and tactical preparations in the build-up to the qualifiers," says Aminudin.

"Our national team's penalty corner (PC) attack is a threat to opponents. So, if they can leverage that and the PC expertise of senior pros like Razie Rahim, we will be able to qualify for our first Olympics since 2000."

The national hockey team will compete in the FIH Hockey Olympic Qualifiers 2024 in Muscat, Oman, against Britain, Pakistan and China.

If they progress through the group stages, the team will come up against either New Zealand, Germany, Canada and Chile.

The teams that finish in the top three of each of the four FIH Hockey Olympic Qualifiers 2024 tournaments will seal their qualification to the Olympic Games Paris 2024.



(From left) TNB hockey team captain Syed Mohamad Syafiq, manager Nor Saiful and player Muhammad Aminudin. TNB has been a driving force in bringing together local hockey talents.

three-time Olympian Nor Saiful Zaini Nasiruddin, the programme was originally named Kilat, before being commercialised as Thunderbolts to involve the public actively.

"We created this programme because we noticed that there were many retired former TNB and national players who could share their knowledge and skills with the younger generation," says TNB manager of sports management Nor Saiful Zaini Nasiruddin.

"TNB has never stopped supporting the development of hockey in Malaysia, so much so that TNB and hockey have become somewhat synonymous. So, we felt that there was more that we could do to contribute to the future of the sport in our country.

"We believe that we have many quality coaches – made up of former Olympians, national players and TNB players – who can develop and transform local talents into future national players."

He adds that the primary objective of the Thunderbolts programme is to elevate hockey's popularity as a mainstream sport – focusing on increasing and expanding the player pool,

enhancing coaching skills at intermediate and grassroots levels, and fostering collaboration with relevant stakeholders to support competitions and overall development.

Nor Saiful adds that the programme isn't merely a training initiative for young players, as TNB actively supports the youth talents in Thunderbolts.

"From the time they join Thunderbolts at 13 years old, these players are taken under our wing. We give them opportunities to play and provide them with allowances so that they can live comfortably and focus more on their training."

Currently, a total of 17 current national players in the senior squad are a product of the Thunderbolts programme.

School collaboration

Under the Thunderbolts programme, TNB actively collaborates with five local schools to consistently supply the programme with budding young talents from across the country.

Currently, Tunku Mahkota Ismail Sports School (Johor), Bukit Jalil Sports School (KL), SMK Seberang Temerloh (Pahang), SMK Anderson (Perak)

and SMK Pengkalan Permatang (Selangor) have become epicentres for hockey excellence under the programme.

"We look for schools that have exceptional players with potential to become future national stars.

"The reason why we have chosen these schools is because most of our local sports talents are found in sports schools. The best players are always recruited to join these schools," says Nor Saiful.

He shares that TNB aims to add another school from Perlis under the programme by this year.

He says that the organisation also conducts training programmes and clinics at schools across the country, to further promote the sport amongst youths.

Nor Saiful adds that while not all the young talents in the programme will go on to become national-level players, they can still impact the local hockey scene with the skills and expertise they have gained in the programme.

"Even if they don't go on to become national or Malaysian Hockey League players, they can still share their hockey knowledge with those around them. Some may become coaches or sports teachers, and some may even start their own social hockey clubs.

"Whatever they go on to do, there is always some benefit to be gained for our efforts in promoting hockey from a young age."

Aiming for Olympics

After failing to qualify for the last six Olympic games, former Olympian Nor Saiful believes that the national team will have to be wary of their European counterparts at the FIH Hockey Olympic Qualifiers 2024 for the Olympic Games Paris 2024, which takes place this Jan 13 to 21.

"Hockey now is not like it was