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By ADAM ZAMRI

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Maybank head coach Iman Gobinathan is not entirely pleased despite welcoming back seven players ahead of their Malaysian Hockey League (MHL) clash against TNB Thunderbolts today.

All seven players are still not fully fit, having only returned from Porec, Croatia, on Monday after competing in the Indoor Hockey World Cup, where Malaysia finished 11th.

Among the Maybank players who competed in the tournament were Ashraf Hamsani, Aslam Hanafiah, Najmi Farizal Jazlan, Meor Azuan Hasan (*pic*), Abdul Khaliq Hamirin, Shahmie Irfan Suhaimi and Izham Azhar.

They have been training with the Maybank squad since Tuesday, but Iman still needs time to assess their fitness levels before deciding whether to field them

against TNB Thunderbolts.

Although TNB Thunderbolts consist mostly of young players, Iman is not ruling out the possibility of fielding the seven players if the situation demands it.

"I need to assess their condition, as they are still dealing with jet lag and other factors.

"Typically, after a tournament, a player's performance graph dips during the recovery process, and that's the main concern.

"It's definitely not going to be a walk in the park tomorrow (today). Keep in mind that TNB Thunderbolts are essentially the national junior team, with 10 to 11 players set to compete in the Men's Junior World Cup in India this year. They are highly skilled and dangerous.

"Every coach wants to win, but I believe my players cannot afford to take this match lightly," said Iman.

Adding to Iman's concerns is the team's

lack of match sharpness, having gone 27 days without competitive action. Their last outing was on Jan 17, when they defeated Matador Hockey Club 5-3.

On paper, the league title is already out of Maybank's reach, given the significant gap in points between them and leaders Tenaga Nasional and Terengganu, who both have 21 points.

However, they still have a chance to improve their position as they currently sit fourth with 12 points.

"This is quite critical, as it feels like starting the tournament all over again.

"It's not easy when you've been out for 27 days and suddenly have to get back into action.

"But for the players who have been here, they have been training hard. I have around 15 players who have continued training throughout this period," he added.

