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## HOCKEY

# COACH CHARTS THE FUTURE

Van Huizen to place faith in his tested players and juniors, shuts door on ex-internationals

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**N**ATIONAL coach Stephen Van Huizen has closed the door on ex-internationals as he prefers to bank on his tested players as well as five juniors for upcoming tournaments.

He said the recent month-long Malaysia Hockey League (MHL) was not enough to gauge players who are not in his equation.

"Well, I know we have a very hectic year with many tournaments and friendly matches, but I will stick with the best available

players in the country.

"The 24 trainees are the best, and I also have five juniors to promote if necessary.

"In fact, after the upcoming friendly matches against Argentina, I might include one or two young players to replace injured seniors.

"But there is no need for me to press the panic button and call up ex-internationals," said Van Huizen at the Azlan Shah Cup press conference yesterday.

Malaysia will face world champions Australia, Argentina, England, Ireland and Asia Cup champions India in the tournament in

Ipoh on March 3-10.

After the Ipoh assignment, the team will play at the Gold Coast Commonwealth Games (April 4-15), followed by the Indonesia Asian Games (Aug 18-Sept 2), Asian Champions Trophy in Oman (Oct 18-28) and the India World Cup (Nov 28-Dec 16).

"It is a hectic year, and the main target is to win gold at the Asian Games and qualify for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, so I will prepare with the 24 Podium Programme players and the five juniors," he added.

Tenaga Nasional Berhad's Najib Abu Hassan and Universiti

Kuala Lumpur's Ashran Hamsani along with Terengganu Hockey Team's Luqman Nul Hakim and Sufi Ismat are the four juniors being considered for the senior assignments.

With goalkeeper S. Kumar provisionally suspended for a doping offence, Van Huizen has called up junior custodian Zaimi Mat Deris to join regulars Hairi Abdul Rahman and Hafizuddin Othman for centralised training.

Among the ex-internationals who played well in the MHL were defender Baljit Singh and goalkeeper Roslan Jamaluddin.



(From left) Syed Syafiq Syed Cholan, Stephen Van Huizen, Razie Rahim and Shukri Mutalib at the Azlan Shah Cup press conference yesterday. PIC BY ROSELA ISMAIL