

Amir: We are much more prepared for ARC Premier Division

By AFTAR SINGH

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia are more confident of a better showing in the Asia Rugby Championships (ARC) Premier Division this year, says team manager Amir Amri Mohamad.

"We are much more prepared for the tournament this year and are ready to give teams like South Korea and Hong Kong a run for their money," said Amir.

Nine new players will make their international debut in the ARC tournament, which begins on May 18.

They are Amirul Aiman Ihsan Nordin Abas, Muhamad Sameer Muhammad Sani Surinder, Samuel Rentap Anak Meran, Bryan Wilfreddoline, Mohamad Fariz Pead, Muhammad Zharif Afendi Mohamed Zahib, Muhamad Hafizin Aiman Halim, Hashraffuddin Basir and Fijian Naivaluoni Raturibi.

Amir said 28 players were named for the ARC tournament but the nine new players were selected based on their performance in a friendly match against the Sri Lanka national team at Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) last week.

"We are confident that the nine players will combine well against the experienced ones to put up a strong challenge in the ARC Premier Division matches.

Malaysia will be led by towering K. Dinesvaran, who is playing for professional club Hino Red Dolphins in the Japanese League.

The team are also powered by five naturalised Fijian players.

Besides Raturibi, the others are Serupepli Naqasima, Sakiusa Terence Gavid, Etonia Vaqa Saukuru and Timoci Vunimoko.

Former All Blacks player Bradley Mika Moni has been coaching the team since last October.

Amir said the players were given three days break to be with their families before they regroup for the final one week of training on Wednesday.

World No. 48 Malaysia will open their campaign against world No. 30 South Korea on May 18 in Incheon, South Korea.

Hong Kong, who are ranked 25th in the world, will start out as the favourites to win the ARC Premier Division.

Malaysia played a Test match against Sri Lanka at the National Stadium in Bukit Jalil on Saturday night and won 31-26.

THE SQUAD

Mohd Syahir Asraf Rosli, Amirul Mukminin Amizan, Muhammad Zharif Afendi Mohamed Zahib, Serupepli Naqasima, Naivaluoni Raturibi, Mohamad Faris Pead, Muhamad Amirul Aqil Kamsol, Hashraffuddin Basir, Muhammad Danial Noor Hamidi, Samuel Rentap Anak Meran, Sakiusa Terence Gavid, Mohd Nurazan Ramli, Nathanael Tan Aik Ming, Mohammad Syahmi Afiq Edan, K. Dinesvaran (captain), Muhammad Sameer Muhammad Sani Surinder, Etonia Vaqa Saukuru, Timoci Vunimoko, Lawrence Petrus, Mohamad Akmal Yassin Chong, Amirul Aiman Ihsan Nordin Abas, Mohd Nur Ikqwan Nordin, Mohamad Khairul Abdillah Ramli, Mohd Fairuz Abdul Rahman, Badrul Muktee, Wong Wye Wye @ Marc Le, Muhammad Hafizin Aiman Halim, Bryan Wilfreddoline.