

# Boost for hockey

By FRANCIS XAVIER

**KOTA KINABALU:** The Sabah Hockey Association (SHA) is counting on its newly signed coach Lim Chiow Chuan to inject some fresh ideas to put Sabah hockey into a new era.

Its President Datuk Hj Abdul Rahim Ismail said that with the arrival of the new coach, hired on a full-time basis, they would launch new approaches and development strategies to eventually reach and achieve their desired goal of making Sabah a respectable hockey playing state.

Speaking at a press conference after officially announcing Lim's appointment yesterday Rahim said: "We have at our disposal a large pool of young and promising players in every corner of the State who need proper guidance to show their talent. We need to exploit their potentials."

"We have instructed our administrators in all the five zones to immediately do away with all out-dated and unproductive policies which are only hindering progress.

"Instead they must come up with new workable ideas to improve the game," he added.

The Agriculture and Food Industry Minister said modern hockey needs more intensive skilful and tactical training schedules coupled with good coaching.

"It is for this very reason we have with the encouragement of our Sports Ministry engaged a very experienced coach - Lim - who played for the national team for several years," Rahim pointed out.

Lim is a Malaysian Hockey

Federation (MHF) qualified coach and has also attended several FIH (International Hockey Federation) coaching seminars.

At the age of 38, Lim is seen as one of the fittest coaches around who still plays the game in national level competitions.

"He has been given a heavy task to groom our players to play entertaining and attacking hockey where speed, skill and durability will remain his main target.

"Of course we consider strength training a vital part of his overall development scheme but we leave it to his own programme which should be flexible and enjoyable to the players," Rahim said.

He also stressed that players, whether they are senior or junior must realise that they have to work hard for selection for any tournament that Sabah are going to play in.

"Selection will always be based on merit and not on favouritism."

Rahim said they have also embarked on a partnership on the development of the game.

"We are well aware of the importance of a continuous supply of youngsters from schools and for this reason we have embarked a partnership with the Sabah School Sports Council (SSSC)," he said.

Rahim said the SHA had some fruitful discussions with SSSC officials headed by Tham Yun Fook (SSSC secretary) and its technical chairman for hockey Tan Hock Seng.

"And on our part, we have given the green light to our coach to make himself available whenever his assistance is needed by the SSSC," he said.



**MAMMOTH TASK AHEAD ...** Lim, (left), receiving his letter of appointment from Rahim (right) during the function while Jahid (second from right) and Noni look on. Herman is seen behind Jahid and Noni.

Meanwhile, SHA Deputy President Datuk Hj Abdul Ghani Rashid said the association would introduce a hockey league for juniors (Under-12, 15 and 18).

However, he said that the plan would take place at a later date because of the Inter Zone as well as Borneo Cup tournaments.

The City Mayor said the response last year was not good, but this time around, he is quite convinced that it would attract many teams following SHA's move of signing on a full-time coach.

"Now it has rejuvenated interest and I can see that in the next two or three years we will more or less be on par with our West Malaysian counterparts," said Ghani hinting that the league is likely to take place some time in June.

"We are working on building a following (followers). But if the response in the future is

good, then we will be having a problem with the pitches because at the moment, we only have two dessoturf pitches - at the Likas Sports Complex and UMS. So I hope the Ministry (Youth and Sports) can look into building another pitch.

"Last year 22 teams competed and this year we hope to double the figure. In any sports, we have to start young and hockey is really a fast game that needs skill and we need to train them at an early age," said Ghani hoping that Tawau and Sandakan would have their own dessoturf pitches.

"If they have the facility, we would have a bigger pool of players," he said.

Assistant Youth and Sports Minister Jahid Jahim and the Ministry's Permanent Secretary Datuk Noni Said, Sports Board General Manager Datuk Herman Tiongsoh and several other SHA top officials were also present at the function.