New league hopes to unearth more non-Chinese cagers

By KNG ZHENG GUAN

PETALING JAYA: Efforts to make basketball a more accessible sport, especially to the non-Chinese, are being put in place with the inception of a new league – the Industrial and Commercial Basketball League (ICBL) – next month.

Under the ICBL rules, each team must field at least two non-Chinese players for the first two quarters of a match.

Another unique feature of the ICBL is the introduction of the handicap points system, which is meant to even out the strength of the participating teams.

"The whole idea is to make the ICBL more exciting especially since we are doing this for the first time," said ICBL commissioner Goh Cheng Huat.

“Our objective is to try and open up basketball to all kinds of players … instead of just the Chinese players. We want to have a good mix of amateurs, semi-professionals and professionals. “It is also the ICBL’s goal to one day see half the national basketball team made up of non-Chinese players.”

B. Guganeswaran, who plays for Westport Malaysia Dragons in the Asean Basketball League (ABL), is the only non-Chinese player in the current national team.

“We have conducted a draft to pick promising players, just like the NBA drafts. Hopefully, interest will pick up soon. We’ve 14 teams in total, including two non-Chinese teams, and that is just an excellent start for the league,” said Cheng Huat.

The two teams that are solely non-Chinese are J Kyzer Royals and AE Dental UITM. They will compete with 12 others – Hiap Hoong Perak, Gatti MVP, Dreaminder Storm, ASN Zhong Cheng, Smart-ACC.com Smart, IH Prosport Blue Knights, CMC Tigers, Takumi Heroes, SBN Sport Eagles, WG Warriors, 906 Malacca and Farmcochem Touch Up – for the title.

The ICBL will start on May 2 and is expected to end in June. The winners will take home RM10,000.