

India have potential to be world beaters, says Rashid Sidek

[By RAJES PAUL](#)

KUALA LUMPUR: India, especially their Men's Singles shuttlers, are set to be a threat to Malaysia if their performances in the US\$1mil (RM3.2mil) Indian Badminton League (IBL) are anything to go by.

National singles Chief Coach Rashid Sidek made this evaluation after having coached Delhi Smashers during the 18-day IBL, which ended on Saturday.

Hyderabad Hotshots emerged as overall Champions of the inaugural league. They defeated Awadhe Warriors 3-1 to pocket US\$4,94,000 (RM1.6mil) top prize. Awadhe Warriors took home US\$2,66,000 (RM874,000).

Rashid said that he saw improvement and progress in the Indian Men's Singles shuttlers, who are under the charge of former All-England Champion P. Gopichand.

"During the league, I was able to see many emerging talents in India. They now have eight good players in the national and back-up squads and most of them are in their early 20s," said Rashid.

All of India's top eight men's singles players are currently ranked in the top 60 in the Badminton World Federation (BWF) rankings. They are P. Kashyap (14th), R.M.V. Gurusaidutt (20), Ajay Jayaram (24), Sourabh Varma (36), B. Sai Praneeth (37), K. Srikanth (38), Anand Pawar (39) and H.S. Prannoy (56).

Rashid said he was impressed by Srikanth's performance.

“He is immensely talented and has a bright future. In one of the league matches, he stole one game from world No. 1 Lee Chong Wei (of Mumbai Masters).”

Srikanth also won the solitary point for Awadhe Warriors in the final. He stunned world No. 19 Tanongsak Saemboonsuk 21-12, 21-10.

Rashid believes the inaugural league would be a platform for many more young Indian talents to come through the ranks.

“India have started a league, which I think, is crucial for the development and promotion of the sport in the hugely-populated nation. I can see a huge following in the sport right now and many more youngsters are likely to pick up the game,” said Rashid.

“The league is set to grow in stature too. There is already talk of more sponsors coming on board next year. More teams are set to compete compared to only six this time. And the prize money will also increase. This is good for the sport.”

Rashid added that he would not be surprised if India make a strong assault at next year’s Thomas Cup Finals and also the Commonwealth Games in Scotland.

“India already have two good Women’s Singles players (Saina Nehwal and P.V. Sindhu). Their Men’s Singles players are moving in the right direction. Malaysia and the other Countries will have to be wary of them as they have the potential to be world beaters,” he said.