

## HOCKEY

# BUSINESS AS USUAL AGAINST OMAN

Malaysia top group to make round robin stage with perfect record

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**M**ALAYSIA toyed with Oman but still won 7-1 yesterday to complete their Group B campaign in the Asia Cup with maximum points in Dhaka.

It was Malaysia's 13th straight victory over Oman, and the final score yesterday was an improvement to the 6-1 win in the World

## Cool Jazlan scores from his first penalty corner

**NAJMI** Jazlan was trusted with only one penalty corner in three matches and he made the most of it by scoring a lovely goal against Oman in an Asia Cup Group B match in Dhaka, Bangladesh, yesterday.

Even though the stopper bungled and the ball bounced away from Najmi, the 22-year-old kept his composure and slammed in a reverse stick which almost cracked the board.

It was the seventh goal in Malaysia's 7-1 win.

"Yes, it was my first penalty corner attempt here and I'm glad that I managed to score even though the ball was not stopped well," said Najmi.

"I knew I had to make it count to gain the team's trust. And if given a chance in the round robin stage, I will not waste it."

Najmi was also tested in several variations in defence and he did well.

"Although, I have been with the team for two years, I am still learning the ropes. If given more time and chances to take penalty corners, I believe I can do better," Najmi added.

Najmi is the third player to convert a penalty corner for Malaysia after Faizal Shaari and Shahril Saabah in Dhaka. Malaysia's No 1 flicker Razie Ramli, however, has yet to score. **Jugjet Singh**

League Round Two competition in March.

Malaysia topped Group B with nine points and will now challenge for the title in the round

robin stage.

"We played to avoid injuries and also to test options in midfield in the absence of Fitri Shaari.

"Basically, this match was used to get prepared for the round robin stage," said national coach Stephen Van Huizen.

Fitri is currently in Kuala Lumpur to attend to his son, who is ill.

In Fitri's shoes, Van Huizen

tested his son, Joel, for several periods in the match.

"We are going to miss Fitri in midfield. I tried out several players in Fitri's position and Joel was one of them," he said.

Captain Shukri Mutalib, who is injured, only played two minutes towards the end of the match.

"Shukri is carrying an ankle injury which he picked up before the tournament.

"Faizal Shaari is having tightness in his calf, and we used him only sparingly today.

"Goals were not a priority today. We used the match to get our variations right for the next round," Van Huizen added.

Malaysia scored through Faizal (16th and 27th), Tengku Ahmad Tajuddin Tengku Jalil (18th and 23rd), Shahril Saabah (20th), Amirol Arshad (40th) and Najmi Jazlan (42nd).

Oman replied through Salmeen Al Nofali (25th).



Malaysia players celebrate after scoring against Oman in the Asia Cup yesterday. Malaysia won 7-1. PIC COURTESY OF ASIAN HOCKEY FEDERATION

## Fitri may return to Dhaka

**FITRI** Shaari, who returned to Malaysia yesterday to be with his ill son, has not ruled out the possibility of rejoining his teammates in Dhaka for the ongoing Asia Cup.

The midfielder said he is willing to do so if his son, Adam Zafran, shows signs of improvement.

Fitri's five-month-old son has so far spent two months in the Serdang Hospital for a lung infection.

"I may return to Dhaka if Malaysia make the final. We have never won the Asia Cup and I want to help the team create history," said Fitri, when met at the Serdang Hospital yesterday.

"However, this depends on my son's condition.

"If he is still in critical condition, I will remain here. I need to put my family first.

"I will make a decision by mid-day tomorrow.

"Regardless, I hope the team will give everything they have and make the nation proud."

The Malaysian Hockey Confederation (MHC) have already bought a flight ticket for Fitri to return to Dhaka today in case he is able to do so.

Fitri added that his son remains in an unstable condition for the moment.

"I am very sad that my son is



Fitri Shaari

still in a critical condition. He is breathing very heavily.

"I made the decision to return to Malaysia (from Dhaka) based on doctors' advice.

"It was not something I decided on my own or because my wife asked me to," he added. **Naqib Nor Said**

## ATA GLANCE

ASIA CUP RESULTS						
GROUP B						
MALAYSIA	7	1			OMAN	
CHINA	1	4			SKOREA	
FINAL STANDINGS						
GROUP A						
	P	W	D	L	F	A
*INDIA	3	3	0	0	15	2
*PAKISTAN	3	1	1	1	10	5
JAPAN	3	1	1	1	6	8
BANGLADESH	3	0	0	3	1	17
GROUP B						
	P	W	D	L	F	A
*MALAYSIA	3	3	0	0	16	3
*SKOREA	3	2	0	1	12	5
CHINA	3	1	0	2	4	12
OMAN	3	0	0	3	4	16

(\* indicates teams qualified for round robin stage)

ROUND ROBIN FIXTURES		
TOMORROW		
MALAYSIA	v	PAKISTAN
	(5pm)	
INDIA	v	SOUTH KOREA
	(7.30pm)	
THURSDAY		
SOUTH KOREA	v	PAKISTAN
	(5pm)	
MALAYSIA	v	INDIA
	(7.30pm)	
SATURDAY		
MALAYSIA	v	SOUTH KOREA
	(5pm)	
INDIA	v	PAKISTAN
	(7.30pm)	

\* Malaysian time