

HOCKEY

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TALL ORDER FOR TIGRESS

National women's team face daunting task against China

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THE Malaysian Tigress face an uphill task in knocking down the Great Wall in their Asia Cup Group A opener in Kakamigahara, Japan, today.

The national women's squad just do not have a good track record against World No 8 China.

Malaysia have never beaten two-time Asia Cup champions China.

In the last meeting between the two nations, the Asian Champions Trophy in 2016, Malaysia lost 3-1.

Nonetheless, Malaysia's mid-field general Raja Norsharina Raja Shahbuddin feels that her team still have a fighting chance of winning.

"I believe that if we show strong fighting spirits, we can get three points from China," she said.

"Nothing is impossible in the modern era of hockey."

Raja Norsharina said China, led by Cho Myung-jun, are strong in

their passing and have good fighting spirits.

"To beat China, we need to be disciplined in our approach and carry out our coach's tactics properly."

China, the top seeds, have lofty ambitions, following their fourth placing in 2013 in Kuala Lumpur. They have also qualified for the 2018 World Cup in London.

Among the lethal players in the China team are captain Cui Qixia, striker Liang Meiyu and penalty corner specialist Gu Bingfeng who scored four goals in

the World League Semi-finals in Brussels in July.

Raja Norsharina is familiar with China's game, having scored against them from a penalty corner during the 3-1 defeat in the Asian Champions Trophy last year. And she hopes to strike again against China.

The Malaysian Tigress, ranked World No 22, are in high spirits, following a 2-2 draw with Japan and a narrow 2-1 loss to India in friendly matches.

K. Dharmaraj's team will meet Singapore tomorrow and India in their final group match. The Asia Cup winners get a ticket to the 2020 Olympics.