

## HOCKEY

## GOOD FINISH DESPITE FAILED TARGET

Women's team set sights on Asian Games medal

AJITPAL SINGH  
ajitpalsingh@nst.com.my

**M**ALAYSIAN Hockey Confederation (MHC) president Datuk Seri Subahan Kamal believes the national women's team have made significant progress and that they will pose a strong challenge in next year's Indonesia Asian Games.

Although, the team failed to meet the top four target in the Asia Cup in Kakamigahara, K. Dharmaraj's side made the nation proud with impressive performances against top ranked teams.

World No 22 Malaysia finished fifth in the tournament following a 4-0 win over Thailand in yesterday's classification match.

Nuraini Rashid was the toast with a brace in the 12th and 58th minutes while Norfaiezah Saiuti (sixth minute) and Hanis Onn (45th) scored the other goals.

In the group stage, Malaysia produced good displays in defeats to World No 8 China (5-4) and 12th-ranked India (2-0). They finished third in the group following the 8-0 win over Singapore.

In the quarter-finals, World No 11 Japan netted late goals in the 2-0 win over

Malaysia. Dharmaraj's side defeated Kazakhstan 2-1 in Saturday's classification match.

"We may not have achieved the top four target, but I am happy as the team gave the top teams tough matches.

"It is a sign of progress. In previous editions, we could not match teams like China and Korea although we managed fifth spot then.

**Next year's Asian Games will be the benchmark for the team. I believe if the team continue to progress, they will have a chance to finish on the podium in Indonesia.**

**DATUK SERI SUBAHAN KAMAL**  
MHC president

"Next year's Asian Games will be the benchmark for the team. I believe if the team continue to progress, they will have a chance to finish on the podium in Indonesia.

"We also have the Commonwealth Games in the Gold Coast next year which will be a platform to prepare for the Asian Games."

Subahan, however, said the women's team probably need to work on their fitness.

"We conceded late goals against top teams in the Asia Cup.

"Maybe the cold weather in Japan affected the players a bit, but it will be good to work more on fitness.

"They are, however, mentally very tough as illustrated in the Asia Cup," Subahan added.

India were crowned champions for the second time in the Asia Cup after 2004

when they edged China 5-4 in a sudden-death penalty shootout after the final ended 1-1 in regulation time.

World No 9 South Korea edged Japan 1-0 for third position while Kazakhstan finished seventh with a 3-0 win over Singapore.



Nuraini Rashid (right) scored twice in Malaysia's classification match against Thailand in the Asia Cup in Kakamigahara, Japan, yesterday.