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Starting all over

IT'S out with the old and in with the new. The Malaysian Hockey Confederation look forward to an injection of fresh blood into the national team after their disbandment following the failure to qualify for the Paris Olympics.

>By K.M. BOOPATHY on Pg 33

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Eye of the old Tiger

Veteran Fitri vows to stay fighting fit and regain spot despite major revamp

By K.M. BOOPATHY

PETALING JAYA: Seasoned campaigner Fitri Saari hopes to stick with the national team through thick and thin.

Fitri may be one of the players culled with a major revamp set to take place but he is not going down without a fight.

Yesterday, the Malaysian Hockey Confederation (MHC) disbanded the senior and junior men teams following the failure to qualify for the Paris Olympics this year after the Speedy Tigers only finished fifth at the qualifiers in Oman two weeks ago.

The top three teams – Germany, Great Britain and New Zealand – secured their spots for Paris 2024 from Oman.

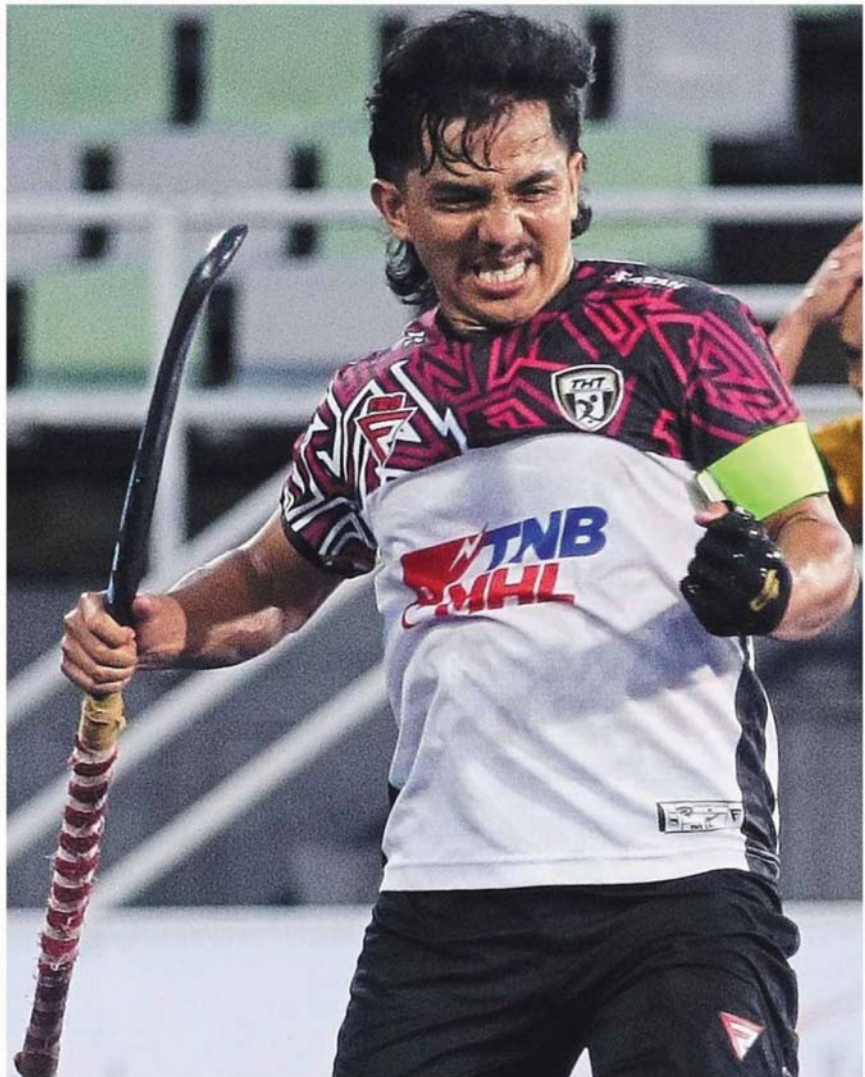
The MHC may bring in new blood to revive the status of the team but Fitri wants to fight for his spot because of his burning desire to play at the next Olympic Games

“It was frustrating to miss the Paris Olympics but we have to start from scratch again. I have not given up on playing at the Olympics and I hope to fulfil that dream at LA 2028,” said Fitri who has 172 international caps.

Fitri will be 35 when the next Olympics in Los Angeles is staged but the midfielder believes he can continue to work hard and make himself available for selection.

“I will be fighting for my place in the squad and will continue playing for the Speedy Tigers as long as my services are needed,” he said.

“Although I will be 35 in 2028, fitness and



I'm not through yet: Fitri will be 35 when the next Olympics in Los Angeles comes along in 2028 but he won't give up on his dream of playing on the ultimate stage.

being injury free are the key and I've to maintain my performance level.”

While the 31-year-old awaits his fate, Fitri will skipper Terengganu in the Malaysian Hockey League (MHL) starting tomorrow until March 9. They will be aiming to beat the power-packed Tenaga Nasional in the Charity Shield on Feb 7 to win their first silverware this season.

Tenaga, with 12 national players and South Korean international Jang Jong-hyun in their side, will be eying to win the treble which is in Terengganu's grasp at the moment.

Meanwhile, MHC president Datuk Seri Subahan said disbanding the team would give them a fresh start where the new national coach would be responsible for identifying the players.

Current head coach A. Arulselvaraj, whose contract expired yesterday, is required to submit a detailed report on the Olympic Qualifier to the coaching committee chairman Datuk

Majid Manjit Abdullah.

The coaching committee will decide whether to give Arulselvaraj another chance to helm the national squad or select a new national coach.

“As of now, we are disbanded and will go through fresh selections under the newly appointed coach after the completion of the MHL,” said Subahan.

“The coaching committee headed by Majid will decide whether Arul will be retained or they would have to look for a new coach.

“Majid will receive a report from Arul first and that will give us an insight on what transpired during the Oman Qualifier and the way forward.”

Meanwhile, the national women's squad have been spared as they are under a six-year programme where current coach Nasihin Nubli could receive an extension to train the squad who are currently ranked fifth in Asia.