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Charged-up champs

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Tenaga energised for higher pressure in bid to retain treble

By T. AVINESHWARAN

PETALING JAYA: Tenaga Nasional's quest to retain their Malaysian Hockey League (MHL) treble starts tomorrow when they take on Terengganu in the Charity Shield at the National Hockey Stadium in Bukit Jalil.

The side coached by experienced tactician Nor Saiful Zaini are the favourites to retain the three titles – Charity Shield, League and TNB Cup – but the competition is much tougher this season, with two foreign clubs Liaoning (China) and Territory Stingers (Australia) making up the 10-team league.

Even Terengganu are a side to be reckoned with, as they have signed two top-quality foreign players in South Korean Lee Nam-yong and South African Samkelo Mvimbi.

Saiful said his squad aim to accomplish the treble again but admits that the pressure they face this season will be higher.

"But we must adapt to the higher pressure. We have been talking about retaining the treble, so we will be the team to beat," said the former international.

"But here is the thing about sports. Every minute, every quarter, you know the game will bring you results if you enjoy it. So instead of thinking about pressure, we'll just play and savour the game and that helps to reduce the tension.

"We will enter every match to win and we have the players to do it. But first, let's get the Charity Shield."

Tenaga will not have the services of national striker Shahril Saabah but has recruited national junior striker Adam Asyraf Johari to replace him.

They have also retained legendary South Korean defender Jang Jong-hyun, who will be the main man in keeping the backline composed. He is also the



Counting on you: Tenaga Nasional will be banking on their newly-recruited national striker Adam Ashraf Johari (right) to deliver the goals. — MHC

team's top drag-flicker.

"We need Jang because he controls the defence well. Not only that, he suits the modern game with his superb long passes from the back," Saiful.

"We may not have Shahril but we have kept our core players

from last season. I believe they have all matured and will make fewer mistakes this season.

"Our strengths will again be a good frontline and solid defence. But we must be wary of teams who can catch us on counter attacks."

Meanwhile, Terengganu coach Harfizi Baharom said the Razak Cup success last year would inspire his team to achieve something in the MHL this year.

"That win has raised our hopes of winning something this season," he said.