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MediaTitle	The Star		
Date	05 Aug 2020	Language	English
Circulation	175,986	Readership	527,958
Section	Sports	Page No	30,32
ArticleSize	939 cm ²	Journalist	K. Rajan
PR Value	RM 142,314		



Arul out to rule

A day after being named the new national hockey head coach, former international A. Arul Selvaraj has made his intentions clear - to help the squad qualify for the 2023 World Cup and 2024 Olympics. > Story by K. RAJAN on Page 30

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Arul aims for two pinnacles

New hockey coach eyes the Olympics and World Cup

By K. RAJAN

PETALING JAYA: Former international A. Arul Selvaraj has been a national hockey stalwart for years, with 85 caps, but he has never played in the Olympics, only in the qualifiers.

He was in the team to the hockey World Cup in 1998 but came home disappointed, finishing 11th in the 12-team competition in Holland.

It's no wonder then that he has these two pinnacles as personal targets as he takes over the hot seat as the new national team coach.

Arul is now out to win the 2022 Asian Games gold medal to qualify for the 2024 Olympics.

And he wants to reach the 2021 Asia Cup final to qualify for the 2023 World Cup.

To achieve that, he aims to empower the players and hopes they will improve by at least 5%-10% individually in his two-year tenure as head coach.

Arul, who was initially supposed to join the national team as chief assistant coach, has been announced as the head coach by the Malaysian Hockey Confederation (MHC) after Dutchman Roelant Oltmans quit the team on Monday.

Arul, who is based in Dublin, Ireland is expected to arrive in Malaysia on Aug 11. After two weeks of quarantine, he will be able to



Aiming to fly high: Arul Selvaraj being chaired by his players after the national team beat Singapore on penalties to win the gold at the SEA Games in 2015. The new national coach wants more such victories.

coach the team on Aug 26.

"I need to redo my plans as I was supposed to join the team as an assistant coach. There's difference between being a head coach and assistant coach.

"I know most of the national players as I was coaching UniKL in the Malaysian Hockey League but I will talk to my assistant coaches as well," said Arul who previously had served as the national team assistant coach under Paul Revington from 2012-2014.

"It's a challenge and I have some plans in training, among them is to bring back the team spirit we had during my playing days, getting the players to enjoy the game and not

feel that hockey is a job."

"I want to empower the players, I believe if we can do the little things correctly, it will accumulate into big gains for the team overall," he said.

Arul has some impressive credentials. He led UniKL to the triple of League, TNB Cup and Charity Shield title in the recently-ended season.

He has been assistant national coach under Paul Lissek and accompanied him as assistant coach to South Africa when the German took over there.

He is now based in Ireland. He has been assistant coach to the Irish national team, too.

With his experience in three different continents, the national play-

ers can look forward to learning a lot from him.

MHC president Datuk Seri Subahan Kamal said they have accepted the resignation of Oltmans, 66, effective Aug 1, although his contract only ends in October.

Oltmans, who had said that he wanted to be with his family due to the Covid-19 situation, was announced as Dutch club SV Kampong's head coach yesterday.

"We have parted ways amicably. He did tell us that he was looking for opportunities in Holland to be with his family.

"As long as he did not join India or South Korea, we are okay. He did not breach our trust," said Subahan.