



13 MAR, 2024

## Veteran Sukri feels right at home as assistant to Sarjit

The Star, Malaysia



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# Veteran Sukri feels right at home as assistant to Sarjit

**PETALING JAYA:** It will be a second homecoming for Sukri Mutalib in the national senior hockey set-up since ending his stellar international career in 2019 as he assumes his role as assistant to head coach Sarjit Singh.

Sukri, who played 335 times for Malaysia and skippered the national team in his heydays, was dropped by Roelant Oltmans to accommodate younger players.

The teacher-turned-coach will now help Sarjit in moulding the younger players in the soon-to-be finalised senior squad.

Sarjit has picked Sukri and Azrul Effendy Bistamam, who was under former national coach A. Arulselvaraj, as his assistants while S. Kumar will also continue his duties as the goalkeepers' coach under the new national set-up.

Sukri, 38, was pleasantly surprised by the offer as his international career also began under Sarjit's first reign as the national coach in 2007-2008. He is happy to be able to impart his knowledge to help the Speedy Tigers.

Well respected for his discipline as a player and also a quality development coach as he currently guides the hockey players based at the Bukit Jalil Sports School (BJSS), Sukri has also continued to play in domestic competitions like the Malaysian Hockey League (MHL) and Razak Cup without fail.

He played a key role in helping an understrength Terengganu finish second in MHL as well as finishing runners-up to Tenaga Nasional in the TNB Cup and Charity Shield this season.

"I am quite surprised when Sarjit approached but I accepted as it will be an opportunity to

impart my knowledge to help the young team," said Sukri.

"Since I have been coaching the BJSS boys, I have also been following the progress of the top juniors in the country and this will give me an advantage in helping the younger players in the team.

"I have played under Sarjit and know his coaching style and I won't be out of place."

Despite his new role, Sukri said that he would still love to play in the domestic league as long as he receives the greenlight from the Malaysian Hockey Confederation (MHC) to do so.

The fact that the national training takes a break during the MHL should provide that opportunity for Sukri, who will also look for fresh talents during the competition.

"If I am given the permission and also get a team to play, I

wouldn't mind doing it. Usually, it is our objective to also look for fresh talents during the MHL and by playing, I will have better insight into the emergence of young players in the league," added Sukri.

Meanwhile, Sarjit also said that Sukri's sound knowledge of the junior players is an added advantage for the Speedy Tigers.

"Sukri has vast knowledge on the junior players in the country and this will be an advantage for us as we are building a young team," said Sarjit.

Sarjit, who has shortlisted 46 players, will announce his final squad of 30 after the selection trials from March 19-30.

The Speedy Tigers will compete in the Sultan Azlan Shah Cup in Ipoh from May 4-11 and the Nations Cup in Gniezno, Poland, from May 31-June 9.