



13 MAR, 2024

## Strict as a sergeant

The Star, Malaysia



Page 1 of 2

# Strict as a sergeant

## Sarjit sticks to rebuilding process by injecting new blood into squad

By K.M. BOOPATHY

**KUALA LUMPUR:** National head coach Sarjit Singh stood firm on the rebuilding process by leaving out several seasoned campaigners including penalty corner specialist Razie Rahim to inject young blood in the senior training squad yesterday.

The 46 players selected by Sarjit with the approval of the Malaysian Hockey Confederation (MHC) are by far the largest pool of players called up for selection trials in recent times.

The selection trials will be based on match-plays where the 46 players will be divided into three teams and will play eight matches against each other from March 19-30. The final 30 players will be named by Sarjit on April 1.

The open policy has also allowed Sarjit to name 14 Under-21 players, 18 players aged from 22 to 25, eight more players in the 26-28 age group and just six players aged above 29.

Sarjit's insistence on youth meant Razie, with 330 international caps and 143 goals in a career spanning 17 years, had to give way to the younger players.

He is not the only one left as Speedy Tigers regulars like Najmi Farizal Jazlan (121 caps), Firhan Ashaari (210), Faiz Helmi Jali (215), Meor Azuan Hassan (198), Shahril Saabah (155), Ashran Hamsani (74), Ramadan Rosli (114), Syafiq Hassan (23) and Zulpidaus Mizun (17) did not make the cut.

However, Sarjit maintained four players above 30 where Marhan Jalil, a defender with 302 caps, midfielder Fitri Saari (172), Faizal Saari (285) and goalkeeper Hafizuddin Othman (107) will guide the young team to be announced on April 1.

Sarjit said that it was important to rope in the youngsters to build a squad for the future for the 2026 Asian Games in Osaka and eventually targeting to qualify for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics.

"Our programme is geared



**Big shake-up:** Najmi Farizal Jazlan (left) and Razie Rahim (second from left) are out of the national senior team set-up but Faizal Saari (second from right) has been given the chance to regain his spot. — MHC

### THE TRAINING SQUAD

**Goalkeepers:** Hafizuddin Othman (Terengganu), Zalmi Mat Deris (Maybank), Adrian Andy Albert (UITM), Che Sharul Azmi Che Saupi (Nurinsafi), Mohd Rafazul Sani (Thunderbolts), Danish Afnan Faizal (KL City).  
**Defenders:** Marhan Jalil (Tenaga Nasional), Faris Harizan (Terengganu), Firdaus Omar (Terengganu), Syarman Mat Tee (Terengganu), Andywalwan Jeffrynus (Terengganu), Arif Syaifee Ishak (Terengganu), Luqman Nul Hakim Ahmad Shukran (Terengganu), Syed Mohd Syafiq Syed Cholan (Tenaga), Najib Hassan (Tenaga), Amirul Hamiza Azahar (Tenaga), T. Perabu (UITM), Kamarulzaman Kamaruddin (Maybank).  
**Midfielders:** Fitri Saari (Terengganu), Khaliq Hamirin (Terengganu), Mughni Kamal (Tenaga), Nik Aiman Nik Rozemi (Tenaga), Izham Azhar (Maybank), Alfarico Lance

Liau Jr (Maybank), Nursyahmi Zulkifli (Maybank), Syawal Abdul Razak (Maybank), Saifuddin Azli (Sab), Khairi Hakimi Zainol (Joh), Adam Ashraf Johari (Junior World Cup).  
**Strikers:** Faizal Saari (Terengganu), Akhimullah Anuar Esook (Terengganu), Azral Aizad Abu Kamal (Tenaga), Norsyafiq Sumantri (Tenaga), Shello Silverius (Tenaga), Danish Aiman Khairul Anuar (Tenaga), Muhajir Andu Rauf (Maybank), Syafiq Ikhtimal Daniel Suzaini (Maybank), Nur Rahull Hrsikesa Thaitchana Muruthi (Nusinsafi), Amirul Haniff Mamat (Thunderbolts), Harris Iskandar Osman (Thunderbolts), Azimuddin Syakir Kamaruddin (Thunderbolts), T. Naaveennash (Thunderbolts), V. Sriaram (KL City), Muhibuddin Moharam (UITM), Tengku Nasrul Ikmal Tengku Rahim (Young Elephants), Easwaran George (JM Antbee).

towards the 2026 Asiad and is for a four-year cycle. We will give everyone an equal chance to prove that they deserve to be in the national senior squad," said the 61-year-old Sarjit in Bukit Jalil yesterday.

"They will be divided into three teams and play among each other. This is a big opportunity for the young players to earn their place in the senior team.

"We only have four players who are above 30 and they will guide the young players. I feel that Marhan, Fitri and Faizal are excep-

tional players and we have to build the team around them.

"I'm not saying that players like Razie and a few others are not good but they will get older. We need the youngsters who I believe will be able to deliver.

"I made the national senior squad at the age of 19 and this is the kind of opportunity I'm giving the young players as they will be able to give everything they have to make it internationally."

Other senior players who also got the nod are defenders Amirul Hamizan Azahar and Najib

Hassan, both from treble winners Tenaga Nasional of the Malaysian Hockey League (MHL), midfielder Khaliq Hamirin (Terengganu) and Nik Aiman Nik Rozemi (Tenaga Nasional), and strikers Azral Aizad Abu Kamal and Nirsyafiq Sumantri.

It was also a day of reckoning for a few players who have been harbouring hopes of making it to the national squad like strikers Nur Rahull Hrsikesa Thaitchana Muruthi of Nurinsafi, who scored 18 goals in the MHL, Thunderbolts' Amirul Haniff Mamat and Terengganu's Akhimullah Anuar Esook where they have received a rare chance to break into the senior squad.

Former international Syed Mohd Syafiq Syed Cholan of Tenaga Nasional has also been included in the training squad and there is a strong possibility of him making it to the final squad if his form in the MHL is anything to go by.