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Fit to be back

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Fitri included in national squad again after exploits in the MHL

By K.M. BOOPATHY

PETALING JAYA: National coach A. Arulselvaraj has thrown a lifeline to Fitri Saari after including him in the Speedy Tigers training squad again following the midfielder's exploits for Terengganu in the just concluded Malaysian Hockey League (MHL).

Fitri, who captained Terengganu to their first ever treble in the MHL, has been undergoing physical assessment and fitness training under Tom Drowley and will join the national squad when the hockey sessions begin on Monday.

Terengganu, formed in 2013, won the MHL league title, Charity Shield and the TNB Cup and Fitri's convincing performances for the team helped him to make a comeback to the Malaysia squad after being dropped in early 2020 by former national coach Roelant Oltmans.

Arulselvaraj said Fitri's commitment during two physical training sessions has been good and he will be able to gauge his level more when the training starts on Monday.

"Fitri showed his intention to make a comeback during the MHL and so far, he has been in good shape during our physical sessions," said Arulselvaraj.



Vintage display: Terengganu's Fitri Saari (right) in action against Tenaga Nasional's Mohd Azrai Aizad Abu Kamal in the TNB Cup final on March 18. Terengganu won 2-1. — Bernama

"However, he has only undergone two sessions and to be fair to him, we will give him a longer period of time to prove himself.

"He is a good player when it comes to skills and techniques but we also need to assess his physical condition and so far, he has been showing a lot of positive intent.

"But my stand is always the same - he needs to fight for his playing spot like any other player in the team."

Arulselvaraj is also happy with the performance of Amirul Haniff Mamat, who has been progressing well as a quality penalty corner

taker, and Alfarico Lance Liau Jr but the players will remain with the national junior squad.

This is because of the flexibility between the senior and junior squads where they have combined their training and Arulselvaraj is able to monitor their progress as well.

"Amirul and Alfarico are part of the World Junior squad who train with us regularly. They also need to stay as a team with several events coming up like the SEA Games and the Junior Asia Cup," added Arulselvaraj.

Amin Rahim's world junior

squad will play in the SEA Games from May 5-17 and also the Junior Asia Cup in Oman (May 26-June 1) besides going for a playing tour in Australia (Perth) next month.

Arulselvaraj was also happy with the performance of the national senior players who played in the MHL and have maintained their physical condition.

None of those players have injury concerns and this augurs well for the Tigers, who aim to win the Asian Games gold in Hangzhou (Sept 23-Oct 8) and gain automatic qualification for the 2024 Paris Olympics.