



The Penang goalkeeper saving a kick during the penalty shoot out.



A Team Johor player (left) trying to tackle his opponent from Team GTC while the fans cheer them on.

# Aiming for the top spot

Blind football squad for Asean Paragames set their sights on gold medal

story by  
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THE Malaysian 5-A-Side blind football (B1) team is aiming for gold at the Asean Paragames 2015, which will be held in Singapore from Dec 3 to 9.

Malaysian Blind Sports Association (MBSA) president Dr S. Radha Krishnan said the team could win a gold medal in the annual tournament.

"Based on the performance in the second circuit of the 5-A-Side

Blind Football (B1) Malaysian Championships, I think the team has a good shot at the Asean Paragames.

"Despite losing to Thailand in the Asean Paragames 2014 5-A-Side Football (B1) in Naypyidaw last year, the team stand a good chance this time but I expect a tough fight between participating teams," he said.

Radha also said the national championship allowed more players to showcase their talent in the sport.

"There are potential players out there and this will act as another round of selection for the national team.

"The sport is also injury prone,

so we need more reserved players during the Asean Paragames," he said.

Disability football coach Sunny Shalesh said training to prepare for the Paragames had intensified.

"The National Sports Council (MSN) had ordered the team to train four times a week and we need to win a gold this time," he said.

Shalesh also said that the quality of the national circuit had improved but the team must improve in penalty shootouts to stand a chance of doing well.

"The goalkeepers did a great job this circuit but the shots made during the penalties are poor.

"We will train the players more

in that aspect.

"The sport is also expanding as current national players who play for their own teams, taught newcomers about the game," he said.

Meanwhile, eight teams including a team from Singapore Disability Sports Council participated in the second national circuit of the Malaysian Championship.

The first-ever Singapore blind football team had also attended a three-day workshop in Malaysia prior to the Malaysian championship.

In the semi-finals, Johor defeated Gurney Training Centre (GTC) 1-0 while Penang beat Perak 1-0.

Penang and Johor were equally matched in the final in a tight

game as both teams did not score any goals, which forced the match to go to a penalty shootout.

Penang manage to hold their nerve and come out tops to lift the championship trophy.

GTC's Mohd Nuri Ajmal Kamal, Perak's Mohd Azwan Azhar and Johor's Mohd Amirul Arif Mahadir were crowned the top scorers of the event with two goals each while Meor Shahrul Azha Mat Salleh, 32, took home the Best Goalkeeper award.

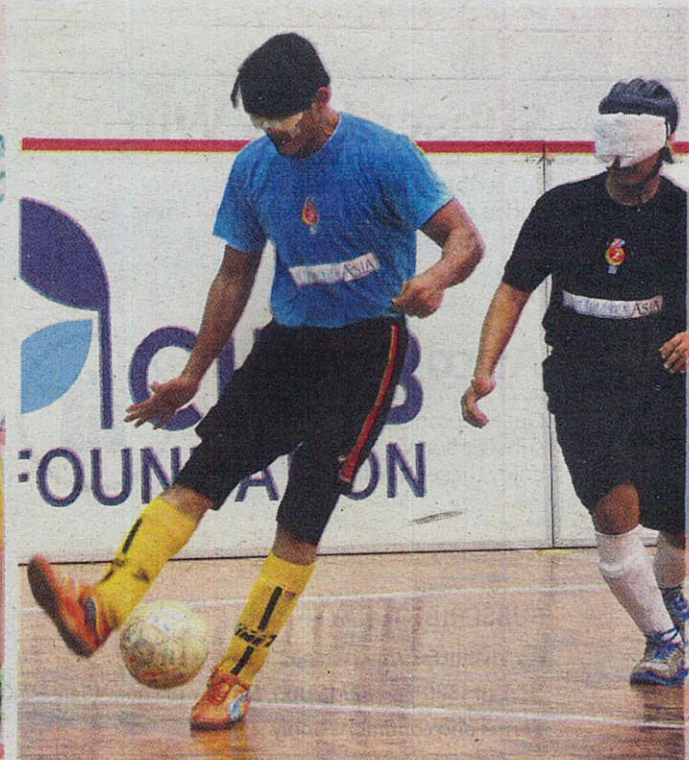
Columbia Asia has been supporting the development of blind football in Malaysia as part of their CSR project. They sponsored the players jerseys and monetary prizes for this year's circuit.



Columbia Asia's regional marketing manager Nathalie Seroux (left) cheering with the Penang blind football team as they lifted the championship trophy.



Meor Shahrul is all smiles after he was chosen as the Best Goalkeeper.



A player from Team Penang (left) kicking the ball while his opponent from Team Johor looks on.