

Red Devils seek permission for 1,500 'safe standing'

LONDON: A Manchester United fans' group says it welcomes the club's application to have 1,500 rail seats installed at Old Trafford, intended to allow supporters to stand in safety.

The club applied for permission to the local Safety Advisory Group (SAG) in December and hopes to be given the go-ahead to introduce a safe standing section.

United have experienced long-running problems with fans refusing to sit down in parts of their all-seater Old Trafford ground but rail seats are designed to lock into a folded position, giving fans space to stand.

"We hope to see this progress as quickly as possible as we have long argued that rail seats are a safety enhancement as well as popular with many fans whether they prefer to stand or indeed prefer to remain seated throughout the game in other areas with an unobstructed view," a statement from the Manchester United Supporters Trust (M.U.S.T) said on Tuesday.

"The North East Quadrant (lower) was selected initially as it has been an area where persistent standing has been established dating back over more than six years."

Rail seating is hugely popular in Germany's Bundesliga and used by Scottish club Celtic but while Tottenham Hotspur's new stadium is adapted with rail seating and Wolves installed some in a stand at Molineux, they are not allowed to operate safe standing areas.

Standing is an option that followers of Premier League and Championship (second-tier) clubs have largely been denied since the 1990 Taylor Report ordered clubs in the top two tiers to convert to all-seater stadiums by 1994 in the wake of the 1989 Hillsborough disaster in which 96 Liverpool fans lost their lives in a crush during an FA Cup semi-final.

However, many decry the loss of atmosphere at grounds as well as the dangers of fans standing in seated areas.

A report from the Sports Grounds Safety Authority (SGSA) recently said rail seating could have a "positive impact on spectator safety" while the government said it would work with fans' groups to introduce safe standing areas.

While top-flight clubs must await a government decision on safe standing, third-tier Shrewsbury Town in 2018 became the first club in England and Wales to install rail seating. — Reuters

Malaysian Tigress must keep on fighting, says Hanis

KUALA LUMPUR: National women's hockey forward Hanis Nadiyah Onn said the squad must stay focused despite the news that their coach K. Dharmaraj will not be around to guide them.

Dharmaraj bid adieu to the Malaysian Tigress after he made the decision not to reappoint to the post.

According to Hanis, Dharmaraj was an important figure in improving the performance of the squad, and under his leadership, she emerged as the country's first

female player to be named as Asia's Most Promising Player in 2016.

"For me, it was not only the knowledge that was shared but the words of encouragement from him that will always remain with the team," said Hanis.

"The fight must continue, regardless of who will take over as coach, and all players need to remain united and take the Tigress to the next level.

"It is sad that he (Dharmaraj) has made the decision to leave but I am

proud that he has taken us to the highest level. Some of us have had the opportunity to play in the European League which is the dream of every player," she added.

Penalty expert Nuraini Abd Rashid concurred with Hanis adding that her teammates must remain committed to all of MHC's plans.

Among Dharmaraj's notable achievements with the team was winning the gold medal at the 2017 Kuala Lumpur SEA Games and

emerging as runners-up in the second round of the Women's Hockey World League (WHWL).

He also took them to fifth place at the 2018 Jakarta-Palembang Asian Games.

In December, the MHC announced that they would not be extending the contracts of all coaches under the national governing body, except that of national men's coach Roelant Oltman, in an effort to inject new breath into the national hockey structure. — Bernama

It's a wrap for UniKL

Varsity side take third title early with thumping victory

MALAYSIA HOCKEY LEAGUE RESULTS AND STANDINGS

NUR INSAFI	1	UNIKL	9				
HOCKADEMY 2	UITM	2					
MAYBANK	T'BOLT	2					
T'GANU	TNB	0					
	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
UNIKL	12	12	0	0	49	9	36
TENAGA	12	9	1	2	50	13	28
T'GANU	12	9	0	3	43	18	27
MAYBANK	12	6	1	5	35	31	19
UITM	12	3	2	7	19	34	11
HOCKADEMY	12	2	1	9	16	47	7
NUR INSAFI	12	2	1	9	27	61	7
TNB/T'BOLT	12	1	2	9	21	47	5

By R.KIRUBASHINI

KUALA LUMPUR: Universiti Kuala Lumpur (UniKL) clinched their third straight Malaysia Hockey League title in imperious fashion, thumping minnows Kedah Nur Insafi 9-1 at the Tengku Abdul-lah Hockey Stadium in Bangi today.

To make it sweeter, their closest challengers Tenaga Nasional fell 0-1 to defending TNB (Overall) Cup holders Terengganu and now do not even have a mathematical chance of catching up, with two matches to go.

The varsity side's perfect run – with 12 wins out of 12 – saw them wrap up the title comfortably, with two matches to go.

Of their goalscorers, penalty corner specialist Razie Abdul Rahim stood out the most by grabbing a hat-trick through penalty corners in the 18th, 39th and 41st minutes.

Earlier, Muhammad Marhan Jalil had opened the floodgates in the fourth minute through a field goal.

He was joined by Tengku Ahmad Tajuddin Tengku Abdul Jalil (12th), Roel Bovendeert (20th and 30th), Muhammad Farhan (47th) and



No way through: Nur Insafi's Mohd Azfar Yaqoob (left) in a tussle with UniKL's Mohd Faid Farhadh Mohd Shah during their Malaysia Hockey League match yesterday.

Muhammad Faid Farhadh Mohd Shah (60th).

UniKL coach Arul Selvaraj was delighted with his team's victory.

"I did not expect us to win the league with two matches in hand.

"I am very happy with the big win and the title," said Arul.

UniKL will play Maybank tomorrow and Tenaga on Feb 16.

If they beat Tenaga, even the second place on the table could change hands with Terengganu

finishing runners-up.

With the title in their hands, UniKL are now gearing up to wrest the TNB Cup – which they surprisingly lost to Terengganu last season – back from the east coast side.

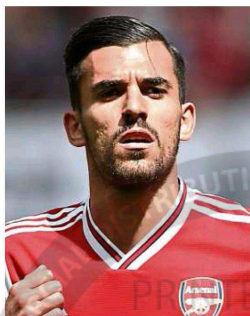
"We have to prepare well for the TNB Cup after this. We definitely want to win it and make it a double this time," said Arul.

Second-placed Tenaga tasted their second defeat of the season with their loss to Terengganu.

South Korean Jang Jong-hyun was the hero for the east coast side, netting the only goal through a penalty corner in the 21st minute.

Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM) and Maybank both recorded 2-2 draws after being held by HockadeMY and TNB Thunderbolts respectively.

Both results were academic as Maybank have already booked fourth spot and the final place in the contest for the TNB Cup.



Ceballos wants to prove himself to 'brilliant' Arteta

BARCELONA: Arsenal midfielder Dani Ceballos (pic) felt angry at not being able to help former coach Unai Emery, but is determined to prove himself to new boss Mikel Arteta and pay back fans for their support.

The playmaker, on loan from Real Madrid, missed over two months with a hamstring injury and has been on the bench of late but not yet played under Arteta, who took over in December after leaving his job as Manchester City's assistant head coach.

"Mikel will be a brilliant coach.

He has learned from Pep (Guardiola, Manchester City coach), he has a philosophy of play which I think I fit perfectly. It's true he arrived in a difficult situation of the club, but mentally he's exactly the kind of coach Arsenal need right now," Ceballos told *Marca* newspaper.

"I've been working with him for around two weeks and now I have to show him I'm good enough to play for Arsenal. After the winter break I will be important," the 23-year-old added in the interview published on Tuesday.

Emery was sacked at the end of November after 18 months at the helm with Arsenal eighth in the Premier League, having endured a seven-game winless run, their longest since 1992.

"I feel impotent and angry at not having been able to help the coach (Emery) to help return everything he had done for me," Ceballos said.

He played in Arsenal's first 11 league matches but suffered his hamstring injury early in November and has not appeared since. There were rumours he could leave in the

January transfer window with Valencia, among others, linked in Spanish media.

"No, when you look at it coldly," said Ceballos when asked if he came close to leaving the Emirates.

"It seems like something silly but our fans had a song for me, there are only three or four players in the team who have their own song and they have been here for years.

"I feel loved here, each time I play at the Emirates or go out to warm up, the fans are always supporting me." — Reuters

