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Defenceless soldiers

Forces trying out South Koreans to strengthen backline

By ERIC SAMUEL

PETALING JAYA: It's hard to imagine but the soldiers do not know how to defend – on the football field. And they are working immediately to plug the holes in their backline.

Two players from the K-League are down for trials to bolster the ailing Armed Forces defence which has been depleted by a string of injuries to key players.

Coach B. Sathianathan said he is testing out two South Koreans.

"I have two weeks to make an assessment of the two Koreans and at the same time I need to monitor the progress of our injured players.

"The bottom line is that we have to address the issue in defence as soon as possible," said a concerned Sathianathan yesterday.

Centrebacks Amiridzwan Taj Tajuddin and K. Reuben are down with long-term injuries – both are recuperating from an anterior cruci-

ate ligament (ACL) knee corrective surgery, while another centreback, Spase Dilevski of Australia, is also on the crotch list.

Previously, Forces could have relied on utility player Fitri Omar but the defender parted ways with the club to join Kelantan during the recent second transfer window.

"I have a crisis in defence and I don't have the players," said Sathianathan.

One of the desperate measures is to move striker Hairuddin Omar to the back to play in defence.

The backline woes have severely affected the soldiers' performance in the Super League, which has seen them slip from the top-half to second from the bottom in the 12-team standings.

Forces have the worst defensive record, conceding 17 goals in 10 matches. They have managed nine points from two wins, three draws and five defeats so far.

To make matters worse, their top scorer Marlon James suffered a muscle tear on his right knee in January and has yet to recover.

The former St Vincent and the Grenadines player suffered the injury in the season opener against Sarawak on Jan 18 and then aggravated it on his return in the 2-1 defeat to the Lions XII on Feb 15.

The soldiers are winless in their last seven matches and they are scheduled to face Kelantan next at the Sultan Mohd IV Stadium in Kota Baru tomorrow.

Meanwhile, Terengganu will be put to the test against Sarawak at the State Stadium today.

Terengganu coach Abdul Rahman Ibrahim said the players must show discipline in defence and get points in away matches.

They will be without skipper Ismail Faruqi, who is serving a one-match suspension after collecting three yellow cards.

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Crooked: Armed Forces' Australian defender Spase Dilevski (left) is also down with injury.

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LIGA SUPER MALAYSIA		FIXTURES AND STANDINGS		SUPER LEAGUE			
TODAY							
<i>*Kick-off at 8.45pm unless stated</i>							
SARAWAK vs TERENGGANU (State Stadium, Kuching)							
PKNS FC vs JOHOR DARUL TA'ZIM (Shah Alam Stadium)							
TOMORROW							
KELANTAN vs ARMED FORCES (Sultan Mohd IV Stadium, Kota Baru)							
PERAK vs SELANGOR (Perak Stadium, Ipoh)							
T-TEAM vs PAHANG (Sultan Ismail Stadium, K. Terengganu)							
SIME DARBY FC vs LIONS XII (Selayang Stadium)							
	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
PAHANG	10	6	1	3	18	11	19
TERENGGANU	9	5	2	2	13	6	17
SELANGOR	9	5	2	2	13	10	17
JDT	10	4	3	3	16	11	15
LIONS XII	10	4	3	3	12	12	15
KELANTAN	10	4	2	4	14	12	14
SARAWAK	10	4	1	5	11	12	13
SIME DARBY	10	4	1	5	11	15	13
PKNS FC	10	3	3	4	12	14	12
T-TEAM	10	3	3	4	10	14	12
A. FORCES	10	2	3	5	11	17	9
PERAK	10	2	2	6	5	12	8
LIGA PREMIER MALAYSIA		FIXTURES AND STANDINGS		PREMIER LEAGUE			
TODAY							
<i>*Kick-off at 8.45pm unless stated</i>							
PENANG vs JOHOR DARUL TA'ZIM II (City Stadium)							
POLICE vs SPA PUTRAJAYA (MBPJ Stadium, Kelana Jaya - 4.45pm)							
UiTM FC vs KEDAH (Stadium UiTM Shah Alam - 4.45pm)							
PERLIS vs NEGRI SEMBILAN (Stadium Darulaman, Alor Setar - 4.45pm)							
DRB HICOM FC vs FELDA UNITED (Hang Jebat Stadium - 4.45pm)							
SABAH vs PBAPP FC (Likas Stadium, K. Kinabalu - 8.15pm)							
	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
POLICE	9	7	2	0	30	10	23
PENANG	10	7	2	1	17	12	23
FELDA UTD	9	4	4	1	24	13	16
JDT II	10	4	3	3	14	12	15
N. SEMBILAN	10	4	3	3	10	11	15
KEDAH	9	4	1	4	15	11	13
SABAH	10	3	4	3	11	13	13
SPA PUTRAJAYA	10	3	3	4	5	13	12
DRB HICOM FC	10	3	2	5	13	14	11
PERLIS	10	2	2	6	12	26	8
UiTM FC	9	2	1	6	7	12	7
PBAPP FC	10	0	3	7	4	17	3