

23/01/1997

Soo to play vital role in Madras

A. Devaraj

MICHAEL Soo is expected to play a key role when Malaysia defend their title in the boys event of the Asian Junior championships in Madras on Feb 14-24.

Soo, who is expected to play second singles after Ong Beng Hee, returned to national training after his SRP examinations last year.

SRA of Malaysia executive director Lt Kol (R) Wong Ah Jit said yesterday Soo is shaping up well and hopes are high that he will be in form for the Madras assignment.

"It will be a difficult task for us to retain the title as Pakistan will be fielding a strong side. That is why we need Soo to be in form as we will be banking on him and Ong to win their matches.

"There will be three rubbers in each match and once we have two points, the third will make no difference.

"Ong is training under John Milton in London and he should be at his peak for the Madras stint and will also be in the running to win the individual title," said Wong.

Pakistan, whom Malaysia beat 2-1 in the last championships, will be led by Mansoor Zaman and Khasif Sujak and should be the No 2 seeds after Malaysia.

Mansoor is the son of former World champion Qamar Zaman and he has always given Ong a tough time.

Wong said that apart from Mansoor and Khasif, he is not sure who the other players for Pakistan are.

"They have some new players but Mansoor and Khasif will be the ones to beat," said Wong.

While Ong and Soo are assured of a place in the team, SRAM will be conducting trials next week to select two more players.

Those in the running are Azlan Iskandar, Nik Noriman, Aaron Soyza and Kenny Ng.

In the girls team, Leong Siu Lynn and Nicol David are automatic choices with Chery David, Daphne Ting, Geraldine Read and Tricia Chuah vying for the other berths.

Siu Lynn is in the running to win the individual title and her main obstacle will be Rebecca Chiu of Hong Kong.

Hong Kong are also tipped to meet Malaysia in the team final.

Wong said that during the championships the Asian Squash Federation (ASF) will have their annual general meeting where elections will be held.

SRAM have nominated Mokhzani Mahathir, son of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, for the president's post.

The incumbent president is Edward Jacob from Singapore.

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