

SQUASH - Asia Cup

# Mokhzani has hopes for women's game

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**KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs:** Mokhzani Mahathir has worked wonders during his tenure as president of the Asian Squash Federation (ASF) but he is rather proud of the Asia Cup which is being played at the NSC Squash Centre.

Mokhzani, who took over the presidency of the ASF in 1997, has now seen squash become a fixture in the Asian Games and Commonwealth Games.

But it is the inaugural Asia Cup, where the women are taking on a more prominent role, which gives Mokhzani much hope for the future.

The format of play means that at least one woman has to play while the other two matches will involve men.

"If you look at most of the top playing squash countries, women always take a back seat.

"Pakistan have always had great players - Jahangir and



Jansher Khan spring to mind - but can you name one female Pakistani player?" asked Mokhzani.

"That is why I'm happy with the response we received for the Head Asia Cup.

"We have eight different countries with 12 women in the fray but I hope that for future editions, we will have more women taking part."

Mokhzani also said that it is his wish that the Asia Cup will grow as a tournament.

"I hope that by the time we have the third or fourth edition, we will have a draw of 16 teams or more.

"It is not an overly ambitious proposal as we can get that many countries in the Asian Championships and Asian Games," he said.

"The ASF will also use the Asia Cup as a means to promote the game for the women and we hope that South Korea, who will host the 2002 Asian Games will play host

for the next Asia Cup.

"Even if we do have 16 countries, we will not split them into two divisions as this will not help in developing the game.

"I know there have been several one-sided matches in the Asia Cup but you must realise that until five years ago, we were still having trouble beating Singapore.

"That is not the case any more and I hope teams which are on the receiving end now, will turn the tables in time to come."

On his future plans, Mokhzani said he has no ambition to sit in the World Squash Federation (WSF) council.

"I have enough on my plate as it is. Moreover, when I first took over the ASF, the region was in the midst of an economic downturn," he said.

"But now that the future is looking brighter, I hope to make squash one of the more popular sports here.

"I will stand of re-election (ASF presidency) next year and hope to have a dynamic team to spur the growth of the sport."