

Malaysia make World League Semi-finals in dramatic style

By AFTAR SINGH

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysian women's hockey team created history by qualifying for their first-ever World League Semi-finals.

And what a way to do it as they stunned favourites and world No. 15 Italy 1-0 in a sudden-death penalty shootout after both the teams failed to break the 2-2 deadlock in regulation time in the semi-finals.

Malaysia, who are ranked 21st in the world, will face world No. 16 Ireland in the final today at the Tun Razak Stadium at 8.30pm. Ireland beat Wales 2-0 in the other semis.

K. Dharmaraj's girls showed that they are no pushovers as they twice came back from a goal down to hold the physically bigger Italians.

Italy took the lead through Maria Garraffo in the 10th minute but three minutes later, Malaysia equalised through Fazilla Silin off a penal-

SEMI-FINAL RESULTS

IRELAND	2	WALES	0
ITALY	2	MALAYSIA	2

(Malaysia win 1-0 in sudden-death shootout)

TODAY'S FIXTURES

7th Placing: KAZAKHSTAN vs HONG KONG - 1.45pm

5th Placing: THAILAND vs SINGAPORE - 4pm

Third placing: WALES vs ITALY - 6.15pm

Final: MALAYSIA vs IRELAND - 8.30pm

(All Match at Tun Razak Stadium)

ty corner.

The Italians regained the lead off a penalty corner converted by Agata Wybieralska in the 18th minute.

But the hosts fought for every ball to cancel the Italians' lead with a close-range goal by Hanis Onn in the 26th minute. The match then went



Pure joy: The Malaysian players celebrate after scoring against Italy at the Tun Razak Stadium yesterday. — ART CHEN/The Star.

to penalty shootout.

The first five mandatory shootout ended 1-1 with Dalila Mirabella converting for Italy while Fatin Sukri scored for Malaysia.

In the sudden-death, Marcela Casale failed to convert while Fatin Sukri netted for the historic win.

Dharmaraj praised his girls for

their never-say-die attitude.

"My girls played their hearts out. I knew that God is with us and I believe that we can beat them in the penalty shootout," said Dharmaraj.

"We worked hard for this tournament. I'm glad that we qualified for the final and also advanced into the World League Semi-finals."