

WHAT THEY SAY



There has been so much hype and buzz over the football tournament because of the possibility of our boys winning a historic gold medal, so it's a downer to hear of something like this on the first day of the competition. But I have faith the authorities will take the proper action so that this does not tarnish the integrity of the competition.

— Football fan Bryan Ong, 28

It is not nice to hear about this, especially now that the SEA Games has returned to Singapore after 22 long years and people might point to the links to the country and match-fixing over the last few years. This is a good chance to show that our authorities are on the ball and that match-fixing has no place in Singapore football..

— Football fan Jamaluddin Hasan, 47

I really hope these incidents don't tarnish the tournament, and all teams adhere to the rules of fair play. Our boys attended a CPIB talk on this issue two months ago. And they are mature guys who know better than to get involved in such things.

— Singapore U-23 coach Aide Iskandar

Singaporean and others arrested, Timor Leste players helping CPIB probe into match-fixing

FOOTBALL BLOW



RELAXED: Several Timor Leste players were seen at the hotel.
TNP PHOTOS: SHAMIR OSMAN

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The ugly spectre of match-fixing in football has come to the fore once again here, as 11 nations come together for the biennial South-east Asia (SEA) Games, the biggest multi-sport event in the region.

The Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau (CPIB) revealed in a statement yesterday that a Singaporean alleged match-fixer has been arrested, along with several co-conspirators of different nationalities.

“Acting swiftly on information received, CPIB mounted an operation that spanned from the late hours of the 28th to the early hours of the 29th of May,” the statement continued.

“Investigations are still ongoing against the arrested persons for offences under the Prevention of Corruption Act.”

Members of the Timor Leste Under-23 side are assisting CPIB investigations while the team prepare to open their Games football campaign tonight against Malaysia at the Bishan Stadium.

Despite the obvious hindrance to preparations, the show will go on.

In a statement released yesterday, after a meeting with Timor Leste National Olympic Committee (NOC) officials, the South East Asian Games Federation (SEAGF) and the Singapore Southeast Asian Games Organising Committee (Singsoc) confirmed that the “SEA Games football matches will continue as planned and Timor Leste will play against Malaysia in their opening group match tomorrow”.

The CPIB said that it has been “proactively monitoring football match-fixing activities in Singapore”, especially with the SEA Games football tournament coming to Singapore shores.



I am the head coach of the team but I don't really know what happened.

— Timor Leste coach Fabio da Silva (above)

It reiterated its stance that there will be zero tolerance towards corruption, and that it “will not hesitate to take action against any parties involved, if they have given, received, or offered bribes to fix a match”.

The SEAGF and Singsoc reacted with similar gravity.

TOUGH STANCE

“The SEAGF and Singsoc take a firm view on match-fixing and any actions by unscrupulous persons that bring the 28th SEA Games into disrepute. We will work closely with the Singapore authorities to uncover such intentions,” it said in the statement.

Timor Leste coach Fabio da Silva woke up to a shock yesterday, when he found three of his players missing from a training session.

“In the morning at training I had (three) fewer players, and when I asked why, they informed me but I don't re-

ally know what happened,” he told reporters at the team hotel last night.

“I am the head coach of the team but I don't really know what happened, my manager could maybe tell you more, but he's not here now.

“The other players also don't really know what happened,” added the Brazilian, who admitted that the incident has affected the team.

While Da Silva revealed that the trio are not key players, he called for his team to keep their mind on the game.

“We had to train with fewer players, but we don't change our mentality. We will just have to forget this, and concentrate on what we have to do because tomorrow we have an important match against Malaysia,” he said.

“And my team are ready to play.”

Coaches of Brunei, Singaporean Stephen Ng, as well as Vietnam, Toshiya Miura of Japan, reacted with disappointment over the news, but declined to say more.