

# STREETS JOHOR

NEW STRAITS TIMES

## JFA to soon have its own clubhouse

**WELL-EQUIPPED:** To be located in Padang Seri Gelam in the heart of the city facing the Lido beach, the building will have state-of-the-art facilities

JASMINE SHADIQE  
JOHOR BARU  
johor@nst.com.my

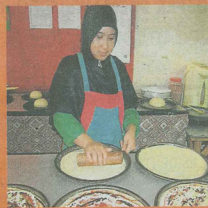
THE Johor football team will soon have its own clubhouse with state-of-the-art facilities at the Padang Seri Gelam in the heart of the city facing the Lido beach. The well-maintained community field has over the years played host to several notable events that included the birthday celebrations of Sultan of Johor Sultan Ibrahim Sultan Iskandar, Johor's first international frisbee tournament and other international sports events. The field had undergone several upgrading works over the years. It has also become a state icon with its clock tower.

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Tunku Ismail Sultan Ibrahim showing the blueprint of the proposed clubhouse. Pic by Zain Ahmed

### BROWSER



## MALAYSIAN-STYLE PIZZA

Shahida Kamarul Baharen experiments with sambal and rendang at Pazz Da Pizza

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## TOWN PARADE

Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia students put up a performance to get closer to residents of Batu Pahat

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## Southern Tigers to roar again



Tunku Mahkota Johor Tunku Ismail Sultan Ibrahim is building a football academy that will use Johan Cruyff's modules to mould talented youngsters into professional players of calibre. File pic

I WAS a footballer and am still an avid fan of the sport. Thus, when Johan Cruyff and David Gonzales Guiza and Johor Football Association are mentioned in the same breath, you can imagine my excitement.

For the non-enthusiasts, football is a religion in some countries, especially those in South America. Cruyff, a former Dutch footballer, is regarded as one of the world's greatest players.

He is the most famous exponent of the football philosophy known as Total Football.

Upon retiring as a player, he set up the Cruyff Foundation, and built football courts, giving underprivileged children a platform to promote social inclusiveness and character-building. There is one such court in Kampung Melayu Majidee here.

Guiza, who played a paramount role in the 2008 UEFA European Football Championship, where Spain emerged the champion, will be playing for the Johor football team in the Malaysia Football League next season.

Johor Football Association president, the Johor Crown prince Tunku Ismail Sultan Ibrahim, recently announced several drastic

moves to ensure Johor's dominance in football.

The young prince, who had filled the position for merely 11 months, said, growing up, he was a big fan of the state team.

In the 1980s, whenever Johor players took the field, the stadium would be filled to its 30,000 capacity.

Tunku Ismail said he sneaked into the football stadium in Pasir Gudang during a recent game, noticed that there were only 30 spectators.

He has honestly admitted that Johor football players have failed their ardent fans.

I was filled with a mix of shock and pride. Shock because he had openly admitted what was lacking, and pride because I believe the only way problems can be solved is when one admits that there is a problem, and is willing to find the right solution.

The first thing Tunku Ismail did to regain the trust and support of the Johor football fans was to change the team's name from Johor Football Club to be just Johor. This is to create a sense of patriotism.

The second thing, which is currently under way, is the upgrading of the team's home field, Stadium Larkin. Starting with the seats, the toilets, changing room, and finally, the field, will also be improved in phases.

He has signed up Guiza, and several local players who will make a difference to the team.

No doubt it is going to cost him — Guiza alone is worth RM6.3million, and the local players may cost more than a million ringgit each.

Also in progress is a clubhouse for the football team and most importantly, a football academy that uses Cruyff's modules to turn out footballers of calibre.

Funds are definitely required. For the Johor football team to recapture its former glory, Tunku Ismail is digging deep into his own pockets.

He has promised that the players who play with their heart and soul will be well taken care off while those, including officials, who bring corruption into the game, will not be spared.

As for the fans, he has guaranteed them their money's worth.

Come Dec 1, Tunku Ismail will introduce the new Johor football team — as well as the officials, jersey and all that is required to win glory back to Johor.

Although not a Johorean, I am, as I have said from the very start, an ardent fan of the sport.

I am excited and looking forward to the new incarnation of the team known as the Southern Tigers.



Johan Cruyff (orange shirt, back row) meets the Johor players, coach Fandi Ahmad (left of Cruyff) and former Malaysian players during his trip to Johor