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# HASSAN: LEARN FROM MOROCCO

Winger scored in Malaysia's 2-0 win over Atlas Lions in 1980 Merdeka Tournament

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**H**ASSAN Sani, who as a player tasted victory over Morocco, is glad to see the north Africans reach the World Cup semi-finals in Qatar.

Winger Hassan scored a goal against Morocco when Malaysia defeated the Atlas Lions 2-0 in the Merdeka Tournament on Oct 24, 1980.

Sabahan Hassan scored in the 64th minute against Morocco at Merdeka Stadium before Mokhtar Dahari doubled Malaysia's score with a penalty in the 83rd minute.

The Moroccans could not penetrate Malaysia's sturdy defence.

Hassan said he is proud to see Morocco reach the semi-final against defending champions France tomorrow.

And he believes they can upstage Les Bleus.

On Saturday, Morocco shocked Cristiano Ronaldo and Portugal 1-0 in the World Cup quarter-finals.

Hassan admitted that Morocco's football standards have improved a lot in the past three decades.

While Malaysia are ranked world No 146, Morocco are No 34th.

"There's a whole lot of difference about Morocco's level from back then until now.

"I'm proud to know there's an Islamic nation in the World Cup semi-final," said Hassan.

"When we competed in the Merdeka Tournament, it was the first time I played Morocco and I knew nothing about them.

"I went in just to enjoy the game and did not expect to beat them.

"Back then, the Arab nations were quite good, but we were able to match them."

Hassan said Malaysia can learn from Morocco on improving the national team.

"We can take Morocco as an example for the benefit of our own football."

Malaysia have been doing something similar like Morocco in strengthening the national team.

Morocco's unexpected march into the World Cup semi-finals is attributed partly to a policy of recruiting talents from outside the country.

Fourteen of Morocco's 26-man squad in Qatar were born outside the country, and this has helped them break new ground.

In recent years, Malaysia have been naturalising foreign-born players for the national team.

And the latest to join Harimau Malaya are Argentina-born Sergio Aguero and England-born Lee Tuck.



Hassan Sani (left) in action against a Myanmar defender in a Merdeka Tournament match at Merdeka Stadium in Kuala Lumpur on Oct 17 1980. Malaysia won 3-2.