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Better times ahead for duo



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MIDDLE distance runners Mohd Jironi Riduan and M. Vadivellan are two determined youngsters who have set high targets for themselves.

The duo believe that they have made remarkable progress since coming under the guidance of former international S. Muthiah, a three-time 1,500m gold medallist in the SEA Games, two years ago.

Jironi, a Physical Education student at the UPM in Serdang, was impressive in the Sukma in Kuala Terengganu in May when he won the 1,500m gold medal with a new record.

The 22-year-old clocked 3:50.66 and erased the old record of 3:51.08 set by A. Munusamy in 1996. The time was a new personal best for Jironi.

He was also a bronze medal winner in the 800m in the 2007 SEA Games in Korat, Thailand. He had reduced his personal best in the two-lap race to 1:52.70 set in the Thailand Open this year.

Vadivellan, who won the silver medal in the 1,500m in the Sukma, is the national record holder for the event. He clocked 3:45.70, a new national record, to win the silver medal in the Korat SEA Games. The old national record was 3:45.89 set in 1998 by Munusamy.

Muthiah said both Jironi and Vadivellan had

Hard at work: Jironi (left) and Vadivellan training together at the National Sports Council Training Centre in Bukit Jalil.

the potential to be the best beyond the SEA Games.

"Both of them are dedicated athletes and committed in training. Their previous coaches have done a wonderful job. They have the basics. We worked together to polish their individual skills.

"We have drawn up an intensive training programme for the two athletes and we hope to see their progress in the years to come," said Muthiah.

Jironi, who had focused on the steeplechase event when he joined the Bukit Jalil Sports School (BJSS) in 2005, opted for the 800m and 1,500m last year.

"I attribute my progress to the training programme initiated by my coach (Muthiah). I

have clocked my personal best in both the events. I am confident of clocking faster times in the future," said Jironi.

Vadivellan, who is a full-time trainee under the National Sports Council (NSC), was also happy with his progress in the 1,500m.

Muthiah said the duo had to take part in more competitions to realise their potential.

"This year, the two runners had taken part in only a few international meets. It is not sufficient for them. They have to compete against stronger runners to get better," said Muthiah.

Jironi is preparing for the Asean University Games in Kuala Lumpur from Dec 11 to Dec 21. He will be taking part in three events – 3,000m steeplechase, 800m and 1,500m – and is keen to win the gold medals.