

Perseverance pays off for Noor Amira

KUALA LUMPUR: National triple jumper Noor Amira Mohd Nafiah (*pic*) was dejected after being left out of the Jakarta SEA Games last year.

But she did not let it get to her. Instead, she used the rejection to push herself harder in training. And all her hard work paid off yesterday as she obliterated the eight-year-old national women's triple jump record on the first day of Malaysian Open athletics championships.

The 23-year-old Amira leapt to a personal best of 13.90m in her fourth attempt to erase the previous mark of 13.74m set by Ngew Sin Mei at the Malaysian Open in 2004.

Sarawak's Kee Siew Lian cleared 11.83m to bag the silver while Sabah's Merry Gabali took bronze with 11.29m.

The Perak-born Amira, who represented Armed Forces, was confident she could break the record coming into the meet.

"Last week, I improved on my personal best when I cleared 13.72m in the Armed Forces Open and I knew I could break the national record at this meet," said Amira, who is pursuing a degree in nutrition at Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM). I was hoping to jump 13.80m this time but I surprised even myself when I cleared 13.90m ... this is the best achievement of my athletics career." But Amira is still rankled at not being selected for the Jakarta SEA Games last year, especially "since I had competed in the Laos Games in 2009".



"But to my surprise, I wasn't. I was devastated ... but I promised myself that I will continue to train hard and to keep improving on my personal best," said Amira, who has been trained by Russian coach Viktor Sotnikov since 2010.

"My aim now is to clear the 14-metre mark by next year. Then I plan to work on featuring in the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympics."

Sotnikov believes Amira deserves to be sent for more overseas competitions next year.

"Amira is a dedicated athlete who has shown tremendous progress this year and has a bright future," he said.