

BADMINTON

Stephanie turns focus to Asean University Games

AFTER a stellar performance at the inaugural Malaysian Institutions of Higher Learning Games (SUKIPT) recently, Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) lass Stephanie Shalini Sukumaran is looking to make an impact at the Laos Asean University Games next month.

Stephanie said she has set a target of reaching the semi-finals of the women's singles at the event and hopefully lead Malaysia to a surprise victory in the women's team event.

The 24-year-old is currently in fine form, having bagged a double at the SUKIPT.

Stephanie took the singles title with a splendid 21-4, 21-11 win against Siti Farah Farhana Mat Junoh of Kolej Komuniti Terengganu-Kelantan (KKTK).

She then teamed up with Yeow Mie Xi to bag the doubles gold with a 21-12, 21-13 triumph over Kolej Komuniti Selangor's Nurul Suhaida Ab Latif-Nurul Hedayu Zainudin.

"After the (2010) Chiangmai games, this will be my second AUG.

"Going in with more experience, I hope to put up a stronger performance this time," said Shalini, who is studying mass communi-

cation at UPM.

"I hope to reach the singles semi-finals this time and help Malaysia make the final again in the women's team event at the very least

"Competition will be very tough with Indonesia and Thailand in the mix, so we will have to be ready.

"We will be the underdogs if we meet Indonesia in the final, however, I feel with some luck and proper preparation, we have a chance."

Stephanie reached the quarterfinals of the 2010 Chiangmai AUG in the women's singles event and was the only player to win a match when

Malaysia lost 3-1 to Indonesia in the team final.

The 2005 national junior singles champion said her preparation for the Laos AUG is going well and hopes to hit peak form at the games.

"We (UPM athletes) have been training on a daily basis at UPM Serdang for the past four months for both SUKIPT and the AUG.

"I am in good shape and hope to put the finishing touches to my preparation at our centralised training at Universiti Malaya which starts 10 days before we leave for Laos." **By Fadhli Ishak**



Stephanie Shalini Sukumaran