Kannathasan admits 400m gold target will be hard to meet

By AFTAR SINGH

KUALA LUMPUR: Quarter-miler S. Kannathasan is already feeling the pressure before he's even gone to Myanmar for the SEA Games.

This is because the Malaysian Athletics Federation (MAF) are banking on him to win the gold in the men's 400m event.

The lanky 22-year-old from Kuala Lumpur is ranked only fifth in South-East Asia based on his personal best of 47.47, which he achieved at the Taiwan Open in May.

Kannathasan said that it would really be tough for him to win gold in the 400m as runners from the Philippines and Thailand have recorded better times than him.

"I don't know why MAF are relying on me to win the gold as this will be the first time I will be competing in the 400m. I will be more than happy if I can clock a personal best time to finish on the podium.

"Besides, I have just recovered from an ankle injury I picked up a few months ago," said Kannathasan, who is pursuing a degree in sports science at Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM).

Kannathasan, who took a semester break in September, will be competing in his second SEA Games.

He made his debut in Palembang two years ago where he was a member of the 4x400m relay team who won the gold medal.

But the team were later stripped of the medal after one of the runners, Yunus Lasaleh, tested positive for a banned substance.

Kannathasan now hopes to bury the ghost of the past in Myanmar.

"It was joy and sadness for us in Palembang. We defied the odds to win the 4x400m gold but later we were forfeited because of doping.

"This time in Myanmar, we will go all out to win the gold medal in the relay event," said Kannathasan.

The other relay runners are Mohd Arif Zulhilmi Alet, P. Yuvaaraj, Schzuan Ahmad Rosely and Kwong Kar Jun.

The 20-year-old Arif, who has a personal best of 47.64, will be making his debut in the 400m event in Myanmar.

Malaysia's 4x400m team's season's best is 3:10.40 and they rank second in the region after the Philippines, who have clocked 3:08.07.