

# C'wealth winner Azizah faces tougher test in regional meet

**GEORGE TOWN:** It is not often that one hears the argument that the level of competition in the SEA Games is tougher than the Commonwealth Games.

National weightlifter Azizah Fadzil certainly feels so as she gears up to compete in the women's 53kg and below at this month's Myanmar SEA Games.

The petite 22-year-old, who won the Commonwealth Weightlifting Championships gold medal in the same category in Penang last week, faces an uphill task to repeat the feat in Myanmar in three weeks' time.

At the Indonesia Games two years ago, Azizah went into the competition having just recovered from a hamstring injury and could only finish fifth.

With the Commonwealth success and a bronze from the Islamic Solidarity Games in her bag, the weightlifter from Jengka, Pahang, believes she can go far in Myanmar.

"Although there are competitors from more countries at the Commonwealth level, the women's 53kg contest at the SEA Games is a unique and difficult challenge," said Azizah.

"The 53kg category is the ideal weight for South-East Asian women to vie for glory at the Olympic and world level. As such, I will be facing competition from the top lifters from Thailand, Indonesia and Myanmar who are of world standard. To get on the podium will be a big achievement, but I believe that I can give the others a good run for the gold medal."

Azizah, whose talents were first spotted when women's weightlifting made its Malaysia Games (Sukma) debut in 2006, became the first female Malaysian weightlifter to qualify and compete in the Olympics in London last year.

"Nothing came easy for me as I had to work hard to move up every level. I first started out in



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the sport because my neighbour Jamil Hashim was the weightlifting coach in my school. I continued to train under him until joining the Bukit Jalil Sports School in 2007.

"After that, I was in the national back-up squad and continued to improve before being promoted into the elite squad two years ago. Now, the time has come for me to move up to the next level and start producing results in competitions like the SEA Games and Commonwealth Games," said the Universiti Putra Malaysia mass communication undergraduate.

The Malaysian squad are confident of ending an eight-year gold drought in Myanmar. At the last Games, the lifters returned with just a silver and a bronze.

Malaysia will be competing in nine out of the 11 categories contested in Myanmar. The Malaysian Weightlifting Federation (MWF) are placing their hopes on 2010 New Delhi

Commonwealth Games bronze medallist Hafifi Mansor (69kg) and 2011 SEA Games silver medallist Mohd Faiz Musa (94kg) to deliver.

Azizah feels that the Malaysian women are ready to start shouldering the responsibility of hauling in the medals.

"The four women lifters are not going there just to make up the numbers. All of us are capable of winning a historic first gold medal for Malaysia.

"There were only a handful of girls involved in weightlifting when I started out eight years ago. We have progressed a lot since then. There is now a large pool of female talents available at schools level to be roped into the special programmes," said Azizah.

Besides Azizah, the other women lifters in the Games squad are Franceay Titus (58kg), Elyonie Martin (63kg) and Norkhasidah Abdul Halim (69kg).

## WEIGHTLIFTING

**Venue:** Theinphyu

**Stadium,** Yangon

**Dates:** Dec 13-16

**Medals at stake:**

11-11-11

### ACHIEVEMENTS

**2003 Vietnam:**

1-0-3

**2005 Philippines:**

1-0-1

**2007 Thailand:** 0-1-1

**2009 Laos:** 0-3-2

**2011 Indonesia:** 0-1-1

### THE TEAM

**Men:** Aznil Bidin (56kg), Constantine Clement (62kg), Hafifi Mansor (69kg), Mohd Azril Huzain (77kg), Mohd Faiz Musa (94kg)

**Women:** Azizah Fadzil (53kg), Franceay Titus (58kg), Elyonie Martin (63kg), Norkhasidah Abdul Halim (69kg)

**Name:** Azizah Fadzil

**Age:** 22

**Date of birth:** Jan 14, 1991

**Event:** Women's 53kg and below

### ACHIEVEMENTS

**2013 Commonwealth Weightlifting Championships:** Gold

**2013 Islamic Solidarity Games:** Bronze

**Best moment:** Being one of the first athletes to be selected to join the Bukit Jalil Sports School weightlifting programme for girls in 2006, winning a bronze at the 2013 Islamic Solidarity Games in Indonesia and making a breakthrough win at the Commonwealth Weightlifting Championships in Penang

**Worst moment:** Suffering a calf hamstring injury a few weeks before the 2011 Indonesia SEA Games

**Favourite athlete:** Nicol David (squash)

**Favourite food:** Nasi Arab

**Hobby:** Travelling

**Expectation in SEA Games:** To win a gold

