



Hakimi gets wild card for world meet

By AFTAR SINGH

KUALA LUMPUR: National triple jumper Mohd Hakimi Ismail (*pic*) can thank his lucky stars.

He has been awarded a wild card entry to the 15th edition of the World Athletics Championships in Beijing from Aug 22-30.

Hakimi thought his dreams of competing in the world meet was over after he failed to meet the qualifying mark of 16.90m, which also happens to be the qualifying standard for next year's Rio de Janeiro Olympics.

Each country can send one athlete as a wild card if none meet the qualifying mark.

Malaysian Athletics Federation (MAF) technical director Robert Ballard said Hakimi was recommended for the world meet based on his achievements in the Singapore SEA Games last month and the recent World University Games in Gwangju, South Korea.

Hakimi broke the SEA Games record with a personal best of 16.76m on the way to the gold. His effort erased the previous mark of 16.67m set by Vietnam's Nguyen Van Hung in the Myanmar Games in 2013.

His effort also saw him rewriting his national record of 16.44m, set at the Myanmar Games, by 32cm.

In the World University Games, Hakimi leapt 16.59m for a commendable fourth placing.

Hakimi, who is pursuing a degree in Physical Education at Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), was thrilled to be given a wild card for the World Championships.

"It's every athlete's dream to compete in the world meet ... I'm lucky to be given a wild card," said Hakimi, who trains under Russian coach Victor Sotnikov.

"Competing in the world meet will spur me to train harder to qualify for next year's Olympics."