

DIVING

# THANKS ZHULIANG

Jun Hoong attributes her success to outgoing national coach



*Cheong Jun Hoong (right) and Pandelega Rinong won silver in the platform synchro at the Rio Olympics last year.*

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**W**ORLD champion Cheong Jun Hoong made a touching tribute to outgoing national diving head coach Yang Zhuliang who has played a pivotal role in developing her talent in the sport over the years.

Jun Hoong said she is saddened by the impending departure of Zhuliang, whose contract with the national elite squad has not been renewed, and made it clear that she would not have been able to achieve greatness without his guidance.

The 27-year-old became the

first-ever Malaysian to win a World Championships gold medal in the sport following her success in the 10m platform individual event in Budapest this year where she had also won bronze in the platform synchro event with Pandelega Rinong.

Jun Hoong, also partnering Pandelega, had also won the Olympic silver medal in the same discipline at the Rio Olympics last year.

"I am sad to hear the news that Zhuliang will no longer coach us," said Jun Hoong.

"It is so hard to accept this decision, but the fact is that it (departure) is already decided so I can only try to digest the situation.

"I am very lucky and grateful to have him bring me to this level today.

"Without his years of dedication, there would be no world champion today, there would be no Olympic silver medal.

"The world recognises him as a top level coach."

The Perak-born also wished Zhuliang the best for the future.

"If this is the final decision, I hope Zhuliang will remain motivated. I wish him good luck for the future.

"I respect and admire him. I will never forget his dedication in this lifetime and I sincerely wish him well."

Jun Hoong, who had often been

overshadowed by Pandelega prior to this season, had also won the 1m springboard individual bronze at the 2010 Guangzhou Asian Games.

She also won bronze in the 3m springboard individual as well as silver in the springboard synchro event (with Wendy Ng) at the 2014 Incheon Asian Games.

National divers have a tough year ahead with much at stake at the Gold Coast Commonwealth and Indonesia Asian Games.

Assistant coach Zhang Yukun will step in as caretaker coach until Zhuliang's replacement, believed to be Australian coach Christian Brooker, arrives in January.