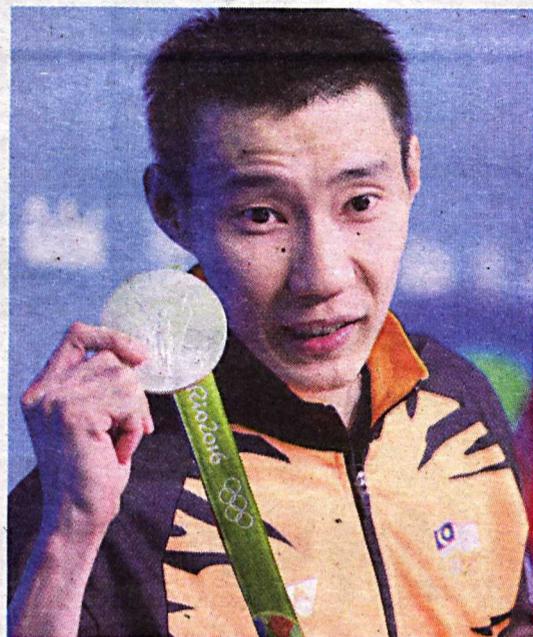


Athletes' REPORT CARD

A SPORT-BY-SPORT REVIEW

By Phuah Shew Beng



BADMINTON (Success)



LEE Chong Wei failed to win the gold for the third time of asking after falling to Chen Long. But it was the performances of Goh Liu Ying-Chan Peng Soon (mixed doubles) and Tan Wee Kiong-Goh V Shem (men's doubles) which warmed the hearts of Malaysians. They played out of their skins to reach the finals. Liu Ying-Peng Soon didn't come close, but Wee Kiong-V Shem just didn't have the luck in the last few points. Badminton has now contributed six silvers and two bronzes to Malaysia's total Olympic haul of seven silvers and four bronzes. Only Tee Jing Yi (women's singles) failed to clear the group stage while Vivian Hoo-Woon Khe Wei fell in the quarter-finals. Malaysia need to prepare now for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics as Chong Wei won't be around. The best bet is to prepare 16-year-old Goh Jin Wei, the reigning girls' world junior singles champion, for the assault as China's stranglehold on the women's events - singles and doubles - is waning.

CYCLING (Success)



AZIZULHASNI Awang saved the day for cycling by winning the bronze in men's keirin. The smallest rider in the six-man final contributed Malaysia's first Olympic medal in cycling. Azizul has said he will be around for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, and let's hope he will end Malaysia's gold jinx. Fatehah Mustapa, the other cyclist in Rio, was unable to even clear the women's sprint qualification round after clocking 11.207 seconds to finish 21st out of 27 cyclists. She is better in keirin and all efforts must be made to ensure she qualifies for the event in Tokyo.



ARCHERY (Under-achieved)



THE three-man team of Khairul Anuar Mohamad, Haziq Kamaruddin and Muhammad Akmal Nor Hasrin failed miserably. Malaysia finished last in the 12-team ranking round and then lost 6-2 to France in the elimination round. In the individual event, only Khairul made the round of 32 while Haziq and Akmal were eliminated in the round of 64. We have the potential, but more training stints and competitions are needed if Malaysia want to challenge the world's best.



ATHLETICS (Under-achieved)



ZAIDATUL Husniah Zulkifli received a wildcard to compete in the 100m in Rio. She finished third after clocking 12.12 in the preliminaries to reach the first round. She did even worse, clocking 12.62 and last of the eight runners despite a strong field. Zaidatul was placed 64th and last of the first-round runners. High jumper Nauraj Singh Randhawa could only manage 2.26m to finish joint 18th overall. The truth may be cruel, but our athletes even struggled to win at SEA Games level. The Malaysian Athletics Federation should nurture Khairul Hafiz Jantan, who broke the national 100m record with a 10.18 run in Sukma last month properly and make him conquer next year's SEA Games and the Asian Games in 2018.



DIVING (Success)



PANDELELA Rinong-Cheong Jun Hoong saved the day by winning the silver - Malaysia's first medal in Rio - in the women's 10m platform synchro. The other bright spot is the performance of 17-year-old Nur Dhabitah Sabri who qualified for the 10m platform individual. She should be groomed to replace Pandelega for future Olympics. The letdown is that the two men - Ooi Tze Liang (men's 10m platform individual) and Ahmad Amsyar Azman (men's 3m springboard individual) - failed to even reach the semi-finals. It's difficult for Malaysia to win the gold due to China's stranglehold. But we must be there to strike when they falter. A silver or a bronze is better than nothing.

SAILING (Under-achieved)



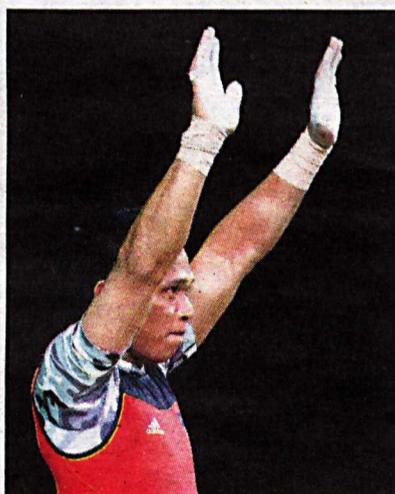
KHAIRULNIZAM Mohd Afendy finished 35th overall on 281 points out of 46 sailors in the men's Laser. Debutant Nur Shazrin Mohamad Latif was placed 33rd out of 37 competitors with 274 points in the women's Laser radial. Malaysia have very little chance of winning an Olympic medal in sailing. At best, we can win at SEA Games and, with better luck, at Asian Games level.



SWIMMING (Under-achieved)



WE can only admire Singapore for producing an Olympic champion with Joseph Schooling beating American Michael Phelps for the men's 100m butterfly gold in Rio. None of our two swimmers - Welson Sim (*pic*) (men's 200m freestyle, 400m and 1,500m freestyle) and Phee Jinq En (women's 100m breaststroke) - cleared their heats to go to the next round. The only consolation was Welson equalling his own national record of 1:47.67 in the 200m freestyle. It's not their fault as they hardly get any chance to train or compete overseas. Heidi Gan was the only Malaysian competitor in the women's 10km marathon swimming, finishing 21st after clocking 1'59.07. She was better off in London where she was placed 16th.



SHOOTING (Under-achieved)



JOHNATHAN Wong went to Rio with high hopes of being the first Malaysian to reach a shooting final. But he did not even come close. He made up the numbers in both events, finishing 28th (574 points) in the 10m air pistol and 37th (535 points) in the 50m air pistol. Malaysian shooters hardly have enough top-level competition and efforts must be made to send them to compete in higher-level tournaments.

GOLF (Under-achieved)



A TOP 10 or even 20 finish would have been acceptable considering the class of the field as golf returned to the Olympics after a 112-year absence. But Gavin Kyle Green (*pic*) could only finish 47th (three-over 287) and Danny 48th (four-over 288) in the 60-man event. Kelly Tan and Michelle Koh also struggled. Kelly was placed 51st (13-over 297) while Michelle finished 58th (24-over 308) out of 60 golfers. No excuses, really.

WEIGHTLIFTING (Success)



MOHD Hafifi Mansor was the only Malaysian athlete to break a national record in Rio. The 26-year-old, competing in the 69kg category, did not waste his trip as he lifted a total of 316kg to shatter his own mark of 313kg set at the 2011 World Championships in Paris. He lifted 140kg in the snatch and 176kg in the clean and jerk. Despite breaking the national record, he could only finish 13th out of 18 lifters. The truth is that the other lifters, especially those from China, are just too good for Malaysia to snatch a bronze.

