

Pandelela hoping for better luck in Tokyo

SEPANG: Diver Pandelela Rinong is not about to rest on her laurels despite returning from Rio as the first Malaysian female multiple Olympic medallist.

The 23-year-old Sarawakian, who added a silver in the women's 10m platform synchro with Cheong Jun Hoong to her platform individual bronze at the London Games four years ago, is determined to go one better at Tokyo 2020.

And for that to happen, Pandelela is counting on a little bit of luck.

She lamented that Jun Hoong and herself did not have the best preparations leading to Rio, no thanks to a series of injury they suffered prior to the Games.

Pandelela was battling with a niggling back and shoulder injuries since 2014 while Jun Hoong injured her heels in

the middle of last year.

"We are very grateful to have won a silver in Rio despite the setbacks," said Pandelela at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport yesterday.

"Our preparations were far from perfect. There had been a lot of ups and downs.

"We both had to battle with injuries and in the process, we actually also changed partners few times (as the coach Yang Zhuliang was trying out the best options in between the duo and Leong Mun Yee).

"So I'm praying hard that we will be luckier in the next four years. With less obstacles, I believe we will able to deliver better results."

In Rio, Pandelela-Jun Hoong, who are also FINA World Cup silver medallists,

finished just 10 points adrift of China's Chen Ruolin-Li Huixia who took the gold with 354.00.

But Pandelela and Cheong Jun Hoong failed to shine in their respective individual events.

Pandelela finish 11th in the platform while Jun Hoong missed the top-18 semi-finals cut.

Pandelela lauded Youth and Sports Minister Khairy Jamaluddin's decision to reinforce the coaching set up with more coaches from China.

There are currently just three coaches – Zhuliang, Zhang Yikun and Huang Qiang – handling about 20 divers including back-up squad members.

"It's great news. We certainly need more coaches to handle both the elite and back-up squads," she said.



Making a splash: Pandelela Rinong doing a dive in the women's 10m platform at the Maria Lenk Aquatics Centre during the recent Rio Olympic Games. — AZHAR MAHFOF/The Star