

Catch me if you can, Khairil dares his challengers

By AFTAR SINGH

KUALA LUMPUR: Stop me if you can! That's the challenge national walker Mohd Khairil Harith Harun (*pic*) has thrown to his rivals for the men's 20km walk event in the Malacca Under and Over Distance Athletics Championships at the Hang Jebat Stadium in Malacca today.

This will be Khairil's second competitive outing since winning the 10km walk event at the Armed Forces meet in Lumut last September.

The top two finishers in the men and women's events in

Malacca will be picked to compete in the Asian 20km Race Walking Championships in Nomi City, Japan, on March 20.

The only walker likely to be a threat to Khairil in Malacca today is Lo Choon Sieng, who is making a comeback after two-year hiatus.

"I doubt Choon Sieng, or any other walker for that matter, will be able to beat me to the gold in Malacca," said the 24-year-old Khairil, who is pursuing a degree in physical education at Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM),

"I'm not cocky ... it's just that I'm confident of my own abilities. Anyway, there aren't that many

good walkers in the country."

Khairil used to train under former international V. Subramaniam for three years and went on to win a bronze in the Singapore SEA Games last June.

He has been training under another former international, Teoh Boon Lim, since last November.

Khairil does not expect to come anywhere near his personal best of 1'29:40 in Malacca as "this is my first 20km race after eight months".

"I'll be happy if I can clock 1 hour and 35 minutes and beat the qualifying time for the Asian

20km meet is 1 hour and 38 minutes," said Khairil, who is expected to feature in the Asian Race Walking meet for the fifth time since 2012.

The 27-year-old Choon Sieng, who has been training for four months now, said that he would be happy if he could finish runner-up to Khairil today and qualify for the Asian Race Walking in Nomi City.

"I last competed in the 20km walk in the Myanmar SEA Games in 2013 ... I hope I can last the pace and finish the race in under one hour and 38 minutes. But that's easier said than done," admitted Choon Sieng from Malacca.

