

ATHLETICS

HUSNIAH TO TAKE IT SLOW

Coach won't push her too hard too fast despite sprinter bagging 100m national record

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ZAIDATUL Husniah Zulkifli must surely now be included in the conversation when discussing potential gold medal winners at the Kuala Lumpur Sea Games in August.

The 23-year-old sprinter finally erased G. Shanti's 100m national record of 11.50 seconds which has stood since 1993 with a time of 11.45 in an Athletics South Africa Super Series meet in Bloemfontein on Wednesday.

The performance echoed her wind-assisted run of 11.36s on Saturday which denied Husniah a place in the record books only because of a strong tailwind.

On this occasion, however, everything fell in place for Husniah, including the weather, as the

2016 Rio Olympian became the fastest Malaysian woman in the 100m.

While happy with her performance, Husniah's coach M. Balamurugan does not believe his charge has reached her peak yet though he wants Husniah to progress at her own pace.

"I'm happy she was able to maintain her performance in these two races," said Balamurugan when reached in Pretoria yesterday. "She did very well in the first race (on Saturday) but unfortunately for her, the wind was too strong. Yesterday she did better.

"I believe she is capable of going under 11.40s but I don't want to put too much pressure on her. It's too early for her to peak because the main target is the Sea Games.

"I just want her to maintain her performance as she still has four more races to go in South Africa until the middle of April."

Husniah, 23, whose personal best prior to going to South Africa for a two-month training and competition stint was 11.62s, has now put herself in the running for a medal in the sprint events at the Sea Games.



Zaidatul
Husniah
Zulkifli

Her new national record would have been good enough to win gold at six of the last seven Sea Games 100m finals.

As no Malaysian has even stood on the 100m podium since G. Shanti's 100m and 200m golden double in 1997, Husniah's exploits come as a breath of fresh air in the sprints.

Her achievement follows that of Khairul Hafiz Jantan's national record of 10.18 seconds in the men's 100m, which Azam Masri came close to equalling on Wednesday, when he timed 10.22 in the B final.

Rio Olympic 400m gold medalist and world record holder

Wayde van Niekerk ran in the 100m A final and finished second in 10.10.

That performance made Azam, who usually runs the 400m, the second fastest Malaysian in the men's 100m and only fell 0.10 short of qualifying for the World Championships in London.

Penang-born Husniah was only denied victory in the 100m A final by the narrowest of margins with South African Tamzin Thomas winning the race, run in a slight tailwind of 0.4 metres per second, in 11.44s.

Teammate S. Komalam Shally was fourth in a personal best of 11.72s while Siti Fatima Mohamad

LAST 10 SEA GAMES WOMEN'S 100M GOLD MEDAL-WINNING TIMES

| Year | Winner | Time (Seconds) |
|------|------------------------|----------------|
| 2015 | Kayla Richardson (Phi) | 11.76 |
| 2013 | Vu Thi Hong (Vie) | 11.59 |
| 2011 | Serafi Unani (Ina) | 11.69 |
| 2009 | Vu Thi Hong (Vie) | 11.34 |
| 2007 | Vu Thi Hong (Vie) | 11.47 |
| 2005 | Vu Thi Hong (Vie) | 11.49 |
| 2003 | Orranut Klomdee (Tha) | 11.51* |
| 2001 | K Supavadee (Tha) | 11.33 |
| 1999 | Irene Joseph (Ina) | 11.50 |
| 1997 | G. Shanti (Mas) | 11.61 |



won the B 100m final in 11.70s, also a personal best.

Shereen Samson Vallabouy, who rarely runs the 100m and was 400m bronze medallist at the 2015 Sea Games, timed 11.90s.

In other events, the quartet of Nurul Faizah Asma Mazlan, Siti Fatima, Komalam and Husniah finished second in the women's 4x100m in 45.71s, with South Africa claiming the win in 45.16.

The Malaysian men's 4x100m quartet of Jonathan Nyepa, Badrul Hisyam Manap, Haiqal Hanafi and Khairul clocked 40.38s to also end up behind the hosts (39.03).