

Gee, thanks Shanti

Zaidatul will have a special guest cheering for her in the SEA Games

By RAJES PAUL

PETALING JAYA: Sprinter Zaidatul Husniah Zulkifli will have a special guest cheering for her in the women's 100m at the Aug 19-31 Kuala Lumpur SEA Games.

And it will be none other than former SEA Games champion sprinter G. Shanti.

On Saturday, the 23-year-old Zaidatul came close to breaking Shanti's 24-year-old national record of 11.50 in the AGN League Championships at the Bestmed Tuks Stadium in Pretoria, South Africa.

Zaidatul posted 11.35 seconds but the time was not recognised because it was wind-assisted.

Shanti set the national mark during the SEA Games trials at the Merdeka Stadium in Kuala Lumpur in May, 1993.

Shanti has faith that Zaidatul will break her mark one day.

"It's just unfortunate that Zaidatul didn't break the record but it was a good effort. I hope she'll keep trying," said the 50-year-old Shanti.

"24 years is a long time and, hopefully, my record will be broken. I'll make the effort to be there at the SEA Games to show my support for Zaidatul," said Shanti, an executive officer with Maybank at the Bandar Baru Bangi branch.

Shanti, who trained under coach Harun Rashid during her heyday, said she still cherished the special moment of breaking the national record.

"It's unforgettable. There was no monetary rewards then. But it was fulfilling and satisfying to break the records and winning. It kept me going then," she said.

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She's getting there:

Zaidatul Husniah Zulkifli came close to breaking G. Shanti's 24-year-old national record of 11.50.

"There has been a dip in standard in Malaysian athletics in recent times. It's the responsibilities of the athletes and the association (Malaysian Athletics Federation) to get it right.

"There used to be great rivalries in many running events at the SEA Games level. I remember my duel with Lydia de Vega (of the Philippines). Hopefully we'll see a better show from our athletes at the KL Games," said Shanti, the 100m and 200m gold medallist at the 1997 Jakarta SEA Games.

Shanti did not defend her two golds, having quit the sport abruptly

just before the 1999 Brunei SEA Games.

Why not take up coaching after a successful career?

"No one approached me to take up coaching. But that's fine. Now, I just focus on my work and family. I've two daughters but they're not involved in the sport," said Shanti.

Shanti's eldest daughter Vиноoshana R. Kannan is a medical student at the Universiti Malaysia Sabah in Kota Kinabalu while her second child Thevisshana R. Kannan will be sitting for her Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) examination this year.