



Champs to the fore

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Not one but three: (from left) World champions Azizulhasni Awang, Cheong Jun Hoong and Mohd Al-Jufferi Jamari will lead the national contingent during the opening ceremony of the SEA Games at the National Stadium in Bukit Jalil on Aug 19.

Trio honoured as flag-bearers for SEA Games

By LIM TEIK HUAT

PETALING JAYA: Azizulhasni Awang, Cheong Jun Hoong and Mohd Al-Jufferi Jamari are honoured to be the flag-bearers for Malaysia at next week's Kuala Lumpur SEA Games.

In what is a first in the Games history, the three world champions will lead the host nation's contingent during the opening ceremony at the National Stadium in Bukit Jalil on Aug 19.

Jun Hoong, who scored a historic win in the women's 10m platform individual at the World Aquatics Championships in Hungary last month, was over the moon with the honour.

"It's going to be a very special Games for me, especially as it is held at home. And it's my first experience as a flag-bearer.

"After training so hard all these years and overcoming so many difficulties and obstacles, I finally managed to be a world champion.

"I take this honour (a flag-bearer) as a reward from the country. I want to thank the National Sports Council and the Ministry of Youth and Sports for this recognition. I hope our squad will do well," said Jun Hoong, who is now training with the rest of the divers in Guangzhou, China.

For world keirin champion Azizul, it will be his second time as a flag-bearer. He led the Malaysian contingent at the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

Still, he's looking eagerly to the moment.

"It's a priceless experience to compete and to carry the flag in your home SEA Games. I want to thank our Youth and Sports Minister Khairy (Jamaluddin) for picking me as one of the flag-bearers.

"It's a recognition for cycling and I hope this will spur my teammates to fight all the way at the Games," said Azizul, who romped to a historic gold in the keirin at the World Track Cycling Championships in Hong Kong in March.

Like Jun Hoong, it will be Al-Jufferi's first

experience as a flag-bearer.

"I'm going to cherish the experience. This is positive news for silat as we look to meet the eight-gold target," said Al-Jufferi, the gold medalist in the men's Putra E class at the World Silat Championships in Bali, Indonesia, in December last year.

And all three have vowed to come good to make Malaysia the overall champions again. Malaysia are eyeing more than 100 golds to regain the overall title.

Malaysia were overall winners for the first time with 111 golds when they last hosted the Games in 2011.

Jun Hoong is expected to compete in two individual events - the 1m springboard and 10m platform. Azizul has been entered for the keirin and sprint while Al-Jufferi will compete in the Putra E class.

Meanwhile, the official flag-handing ceremony for the Malaysian contingent will be held in Putrajaya tomorrow with the Yang di-Pertuan Agong Sultan Muhammad V gracing the occasion.