

## ATHLETICS

# WOMEN'S QUARTET BREAK RECORD

Coach Balamurugan says team can give Thailand a good fight in Sea Games

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**T**HE national women's sprinters are slowly closing the gap on Thailand though it may still be too soon to hope for a golden outing at the Kuala Lumpur Sea Games next month.

For a second consecutive race, the women's 4x100m quartet broke the national record by clocking 45.18 seconds to finish fifth at the Asian Track and Field Championships in Bhubaneswar, India on Saturday.

The team of Zaidatul Husniah Zulkfli, S. Komalam Shally, Siti Fatima Mohamad and Nurul Faizah Asma Mazlan, who ran in place of the injured Shereen Samson Valabouy, finished just behind Thailand, who took fourth in 44.74s.

The Malaysian quartet broke the record of 45.19 set by Husniah, Komalam, Fatima and Shereen at the Thailand Open on June 15.

Sprints coach M. Balamurugan said with more practice, the women should be able to give Thailand and Vietnam a run for their money.

"Yes, we are closing the gap on the other countries and it was another good performance," said Balamurugan, who added that national schools sprint champion Azreen Nabila Alias will join the relay team's training while Shereen recuperates from a hamstring injury.

"But the girls need more baton prac-

tice. After the pre-Sea Games meet (Malaysian Open on July 17-18), Azreen will join training to make the team much stronger."

Malaysia earned a bronze medal in the women's 4x100m at the 2015 Sea Games in Singapore but have not won gold since 1981, after which Thailand have taken the title each time - a run of 17 editions.

The men's 4x100m relay quartet of Jonathan Nyepa, Badrul Hisyam Manap, Nixson Kennedy and Khairul Hafiz Jantan finished fifth in the final in 39.98s as China edged Thailand for the gold medal in a photo-finish after both relay teams timed 39.38s.

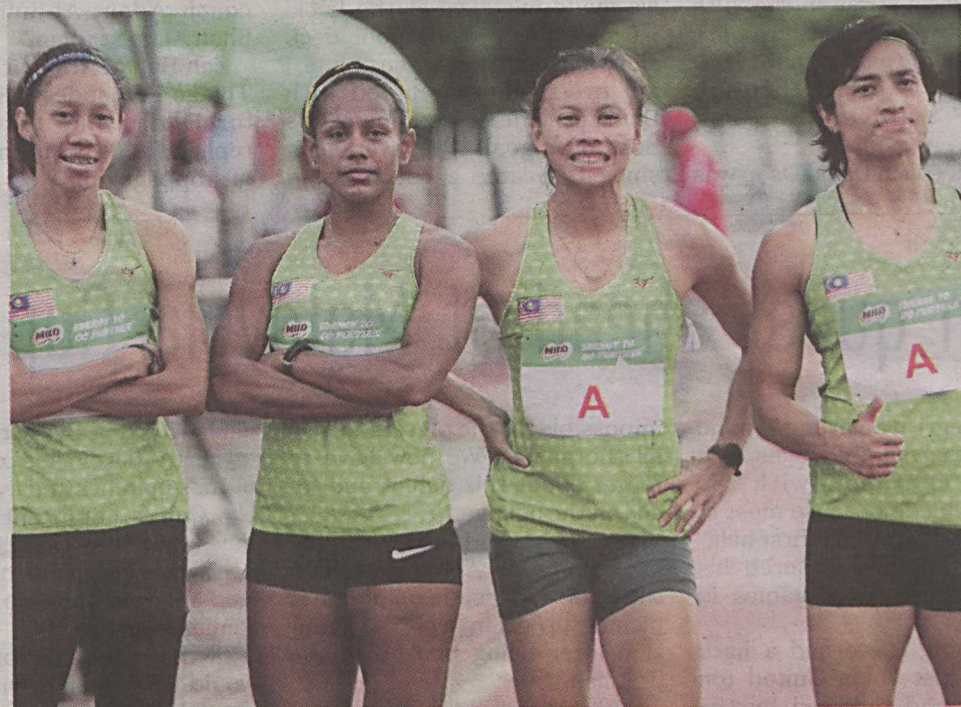
In other events, high jumper Lee Hup Wei, the 2007 Asian champion, tied

for sixth after clearing 2.20 metres, while Jackie Wong finished eighth in the men's hammer with a throw of 64.84m.

Malaysia's campaign at the four-day meet concluded yesterday when G. Aravinn Thevarr and Komalam failed to advance to the men's and women's 200m finals respectively.

Aravinn clocked 21.44s to finish sixth in his heat while Komalam came home third in her heat in 24.53s to miss out on a final spot by 0.21 to China's Lin Huijun.

Discus thrower's Irfan Shamshuddin silver was the only medal, the first at the championships in eight years, won by the 18-member team.



The national 4x100 women's quartet (from left) Zaidatul Husniah Zulkfli, S. Komalam Shally, Nurul Faizah Asma Mazlan and Siti Fatima Mohamad broke the national record with a time of 45.18 seconds at the Asian Track and Field Championships in Bhubaneswar, India on Saturday.