

A historic year indeed

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Malaysia has produced four world champs in four months

By LIM TEIK HUAT

PETALING JAYA: It has been a smashing year for Malaysian sports so far – and the Kuala Lumpur SEA Games have not even started.

The nation, which will celebrate its 60th year of independence on Aug 31, has now produced four world champions in just four months.

Azizulhasni Awang, who stands at 1.68m tall, showed that size does not matter as he beat the physically bigger Europeans in track cycling.

The 29-year-old made the nation proud by bagging the keirin gold at the World Track Cycling Championships in Hong Kong in April.

Azizul, who won bronze in the Rio Olympics last year, is the nation's first world champion in an Olympic discipline.

The nation rejoiced as well when Rio Paralympic gold medallists Ziyad Zolkefli and Abdul Latif Romly triumphed within a space of 12 hours at the World Para Athletics Championships in London last weekend.

After Ziyad broke his own world record en route to winning the men's shot putt F20 (learning disability) on Saturday, Abdul Latif retained his men's long jump T20 (learning disability) crown on Sunday.

Ziyad broke his own world record of 16.84m set in Rio last year after hurling 17.29m to reclaim the title he last won in the 2013 edition in Lyon, France.

Abdul Latif leapt 7.37m to better his own championship mark of 7.35m, which he set en route to the gold in the 2015 edition in Doha, Qatar.

The good times did not end there as diver Cheong Jun Hoong chalked up a stunning upset by beating a top field to claim the women's 10m platform individual title at the World Aquatics Championships in Budapest, Hungary, on Wednesday.

Jun Hoong, who is the second Malaysian athlete to be crowned world champion in an Olympic discipline, stands to receive RM80,000 under the National Sports Council's



Tears of joy: Cheong Jun Hoong is overcome with emotion after winning the women's 10m platform final at the World Aquatics Championships in Budapest on Wednesday. – AP

(NSC) incentive scheme for her golden feat.

Youth and Sports Minister Khairy Jamaluddin congratulated the 27-year-old on her historic breakthrough.

“What Jun Hoong has achieved is nothing short of greatness. She has broken China's dominance in diving. A nation honours her,” he tweeted.

And there could be another

world champion crowned this Saturday.

Mohd Ridzuan Mohd Puzi, who bagged the nation's first gold at the Rio Paralympics last year, will be running in the men's T36 (cerebral palsy) event in London on Saturday.

Ridzuan is the favourite to defend the 100m gold he won in Doha with a time of 12.08. He clocked a new Olympic record of 12.07 in Rio last year.