

SPORTCHECK

WHO WILL LEAD MALAYSIA?

Four world champions to be considered as flag-bearer

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MALAYSIA will have four world champions to choose from to be their contingent's flag-bearer in the Kuala Lumpur Sea Games on Aug 19-30.

Cyclist Azizulhasni Awang is the leading contender having produced significant firsts for Malaysia in last year's Rio Olympics and the Track Cycling World Championships in Hong Kong in April.

The 29-year-old won the Olympic bronze in Rio and followed up with the world title this year, both in keirin.

Azizulhasni will be competing in the keirin and sprint events in the Sea Games, where track cycling will be held in Nilai.

Next in line is newly crowned diving world champion Cheong Jun Hoong.

The 27-year-old grabbed attention in the recent World Championships in Budapest, Hungary.

She overcame two Chinese stars for Malaysia's first ever World Championships title in the women's 10m platform individual event.

Jun Hoong also partnered Pandelega Rinong for the platform synchro bronze medal. In Rio last year, the pair bagged

Malaysia's first ever diving silver medal in the Olympics in the same event.

Compatriot Leong Mun Yee was the flag-bearer in the 2015 Singapore edition.

Ziyad Zolkefli and Abdul Latif Romly grabbed headlines in the World Para Athletics Championships in London by winning gold medals in their respective events.

Ziyad set a new world record en route to his second world title in the men's F20 (intellectual disability) shot put, while Latif successfully defended his T20 (intellectual disability) long jump gold, setting new games record in the process.

Both men will be making their debuts in the Sea Games, a competition for able-bodied athletes.

Sports Minister Khairy Jamaluddin said Malaysia's flag-bearer and medal target will be announced on Aug 10.

"The flag-bearer will be named then... and 'No', I am definitely not the flag-bearer for the contingent... definitely not," said Khairy, who will represent the country in polo.

"The medal target will also be announced on the same day."

Malaysia's strongest rival are expected to face resistance from Thailand, who have targeted 100 gold medals, for the Sea

Games overall title.

Based on a recent assessment, Malaysia are good enough to win more than 110 gold medals.

The last time Malaysia were overall champions was when they hosted the biennial games in 2001 with 111 gold, 75 silver and 85 bronze.

In the 2015 Singapore edition, Malaysia were fourth with a haul of 62 gold, 58 silver and 66 bronze. Thailand topped the standings with 95 gold, 83 silver and 69 bronze.



(Clockwise from top left) Azizulhasni Awang, Cheong Jun Hoong, Abdul Latif Romly and Ziyad Zolkefli.