



# BIG NAMES AT KL2017

Olympic gold medallists and world champions join the fray

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**T**HOUGH known as a development platform for up and coming athletes from around the region, the Kuala Lumpur Sea Games will also feature a number of world class athletes for local fans to savour first hand.

The following athletes are among the big names who have been registered for the games and barring injury or any unforeseen circumstances, the following athletes will compete in track cycling, diving, swimming, weightlifting, taekwondo, shooting and badminton.

Olympic bronze medallist Azizulhasni Awang will lead the nation's charge in track cycling at the National Velodrome in Nilai from Aug 27 to 29.

Azizulhasni, who entered the history books last year as the first Malaysian to win a medal in cycling at the Olympics, is in fine form, having recently secured his maiden World Championship title in his pet event, the keirin.

The Terengganu-born is keen to appear in front of a home crowd at

the newly completed National Velodrom. Teammates Mohd Shah Firdaus Sahrom, who secured his first World Cup medal earlier this year, as well as former Asian Championship gold medallist Fatehah Mustapa, will also be competing for Malaysia.

Swimming will feature Singapore sensation Joseph Schooling, who hogged the limelight worldwide when he beat childhood idol Michael Phelps en route to the 100m butterfly gold at the Rio Olympics last year.

He, however, made the headlines for the wrong reasons recently having commented: "I think it will be nice to go to Malaysia's backyard and teach them a thing or two" in a television interview with Singapore's Channel NewsAsia on Aug 1.

The 22-year-old has since apologised for the remark but it will be interesting to see how the Malaysian crowd receives him during the competition from Aug 21-26 at the National Aquatics Centre in Bukit Jalil.

The diving event will no doubt be a highly anticipated affair for local fans with dive queens Pandeleda Rinong and Cheong Jun Hoong both competing.

Pandeleda put Malaysia on the

world map in diving when she took bronze in the women's platform individual event at the 2012 London Olympics. The duo teamed up to clinch the platform synchronised silver at the Rio Olympics last year and bronze at the Budapest World Championships last month.

Jun Hoong also stepped out of Pandeleda's shadow in Budapest when she stunned the field to win the platform individual gold against all odds.

All eyes will be on Indonesian Eko Yuli Irawan in the weightlifting competition at the Malaysia International Trade and Exhibition centre (MITEC) on Aug 28-30.

Eko, a three-time Olympic medallist (Beijing, London, Rio), will be eager to defend his men's under-62kg gold as the sport was not included at the Singapore Games.

The 28-year-old has won gold at every edition of the Sea Games since the 2007 Korat games.

Vietnam's hopes in the shooting competition at the National Shooting Range in Subang on Aug 21-26 will rest on the shoulders of pistol specialist Hoang Xuan Vinh.

Xuan Vinh made his Olympic

breakthrough at the Rio Games last year where he won a gold in the men's 10m air pistol and silver in the 50m free pistol.

China-born Feng Tianwei will feature for Singapore in the women's table tennis competition on Aug 20-26. Tianwei, 30, is a three-time Olympic medallist and will be the outright favourite at MITEC.

Thai exponent Tawin Hanprab will be the man to watch in the taekwondo competition at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre (KLCC) on Aug 21-26.

The youngster, who turned 19 on Aug 1, is a rising star in the sport having won silver in the men's under 58kg class at the Rio Olympics last year.

The badminton World Championships in Glasgow has robbed the tournament of many big names, including Lee Chong Wei, though Chan Peng Soon, who delivered the mixed double silver in Rio together with Goh Liu Ying, will be competing.

He will partner Cheah Yee See in the mixed doubles and they are expected to challenge for the gold.



Pandeleda Rinong