



COMMONWEALTH GAMES' INTERESTING MOMENTS

Ups and downs of Malaysian athletes in Gold Coast

GOLD COAST: The Gold Coast Commonwealth Games ended on Sunday with Malaysia surpassing their target.

To recap, here are some of the athletes' best performances, heartbreaking moments, record breaking feats, funniest and inspiring quotes and bloopers.

GRAND FINALE

Lee Chong Wei defied his advanced age to embarrass World No 1 K. Srikanth for the men's singles title in his games swansong. The World No 7 is now the most successful Malaysian athlete in the games with five gold and one silver.

HEARTBREAKING MOMENT

Eight-time world champion Nicol David, the Serena Williams of women's squash, failed to win a medal in the women's singles in what could be her final outing at the games.

Nicol, who will turn 35 in August, won the event in the 2010 (New Delhi) and 2014 (Glasgow) editions.

RECORD BREAKERS

1 Weightlifter Azroy Hazal Wafie Izhar Ahmad not only won Malaysia's first gold medal in the Gold Coast, but also broke two Commonwealth Games records in the men's 56kg. He lifted 117kg in the snatch to smash the eight-year-old record of 116kg set by Amirul Hamizan Ibrahim in 2010 (New Delhi). The overall 261kg score by Azroy also broke the 260kg record by Amirul in 2002 (Manchester).

2 Para powerlifter Bonnie Bunyau Gustin smashed his world junior record of 157kg by lifting 166kg, but unfortunately he could only finish fourth in the men's lightweight category.

3 Para swimmer Carmen Lim erased her Asean record of 36.48s in the women's S8 50m freestyle by clocking 35.95s but finished fifth in the race.

4 Swimmer Tern Jian Han made a huge splash when he smashed Lim Keng Liat's 16-year national record of 25.67s in the 50m backstroke by clocking 25.60 in the semi-finals. However, he could not repeat the feat in the final where he finished eighth.

5 Weightlifter Siti Aisyah Md Rosli broke her national records of 90kg (snatch) and 115kg (clean & jerk) with 91kg (snatch) and 123kg (clean & jerk) in the women's 90kg event en route to finishing fourth.

6 Rhythmic gymnasts Amy Kwan (1 gold 1 silver 2 bronze) and Koi Sie Yan (0-3-1) were Malaysia's most decorated athletes with four medals each in the Gold Coast.

SIGNIFICANT BREAKTHROUGHS (NO MEDALS)

1 Welson Sim became the first Malaysian swimmer since Lim Keng

Liat in 2002 to reach a Commonwealth Games final. He did so in the 400m freestyle before Tern Jian Han equalled his feat in the 50m backstroke. Welson also swam in the 1,500 final without having to race in the heats.

2 Cyclist Shah Firdaus Sahrom hit the headlines by outpacing world champion Matt Glaetzer of Australia in the men's sprint first round. However, the Malaysian could only finish fourth in the event.

3 Sprinter Zaidatul Husniah Zulkifli scorched the tracks by reaching the women's 100m semi-finals while the men's 4x100m quartet, anchored by Khairul Hafiz Jantan, made the final of the event. However, both did not make progress in the next round.

4 Rachel Arnold-S. Sivasangari pulled off a shocker by stunning top seeds and world champions Joelle King-Amanda Landers Murphy of New Zealand in a women's doubles group match before bowing out in the quarter-finals.

UNEXPECTED MEDALS

1 Nafizwan Adnan created history by winning Malaysia's first ever medal in men's squash at the games. The Terengganu-born, who shocked defending champion Nick Matthews in the quarter-finals, won a bronze in the men's singles.

2 Paddlers Ho Ying and Karen Lyne served up a surprise by becoming the first Malaysians to finish on the podium in an individual table tennis event. The pair upset India's M. Sutirtha-S. Pooja for the bronze.

3 Shuttleers Chow Mei Kuan and Vivian Hoo played in only one tournament together prior to the games but still managed to win the

women's doubles gold medal. Mei Kuan was a replacement for Vivian's regular partner Woon Khe Wei.

4 Muhd Afiq Mohamad Ali Hanafiah won the bronze in 11.28s in men's 100m T12 (visual impairment) to become the first Malaysian para athlete to deliver a medal in athletics in 16 years.

BIGGEST LET-DOWNS

1 Goh V Shem-Tan Wee Kiong (men's doubles) and Goh Soon Huat-Shevon Lai (mixed doubles) were the top seeds in their respective events but both pairs failed to justify their seeding. V Shem-Wee Kiong won bronze while Soon Huat-Shevon did not even make the semi-finals.

2 Azizulhasni Awang arrived in the Gold Coast as a former world keirin champion but the Melbourne-based rider could not do his best due to viral infection.

3 World champion Cheong Jun Hoong and former winner Pandelala Rinong entered the women's 10m platform with great expectations, but a series of poor dives saw them finish outside the medals.

4 Nauraj Singh Randhawa was touted as a potential medallist in the men's high jump. Despite a personal best of 2.30m, he could only finish ninth after clearing 2.18m.

5 Discus specialist Irfan Shamsuddin, who won the Asian title last year, was expected to make an impact but all of his three throws were disqualified, thus failing to make the final.

6 Triple jumper Muhammad Hakimi Ismail paid dearly for his

cautious approach as the Malaysian flag-bearer could only record his best jump of 15.97 to finish ninth.

BLOOPER

It must be Ahmad Amsyar Azman's belly flop in the men's 3m springboard diving event. It was his second belly flop after the 2016 Rio Olympics.

FUNNIEST QUOTE

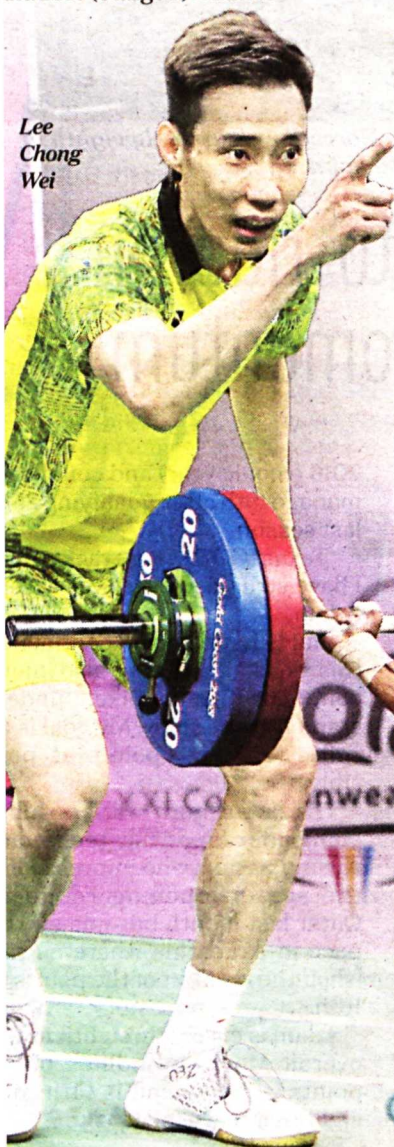
"It is a mental issue. I can't explain it as it is something inside my brain and if I explain, you wouldn't understand," Diver Ooi Tze Liang after failing to defend his men's 3m springboard gold medal.

MEMORABLE QUOTES

"A veteran won today. Definitely my sweetest and most memorable Commonwealth Games. It is always great to win on your final outing."

Shuttle Lee Chong Wei after winning the men's singles gold medal.

"If we decide to cry today, we do it on the podium," Lawn bowler Siti Zalina Ahmad told teammate Emma Firyana Saroji after winning the women's pairs final.



Lee Chong Wei



Azroy Hazal Wafie



Nicol David



Shah Firdaus Sahrom



Ho Ying and Karen Lyne



STORMY DAYS AHEAD

Sadek says Malaysians will struggle for medals in Asian Games

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THE national's contingent's seven-gold haul at the Gold Coast Commonwealth Games is a clear indication of a bigger disaster awaiting Malaysia in four months' time at the Asian Games in Jakarta.

This prediction was made by Sadek Mustaffa, senior lecturer at the Faculty of Sports Science and Recreation at UiTM

Shah Alam.

He believes that the overall performance in Australia was not convincing enough, because the preparations were inadequate and compounded by athletes who are mentally weak.

"The preparations to compete in Australia were not enough as the athletes did not compete in pre-games that were of good quality, and they were also not prepared mentally for the games.

"As an example, the men were

doing well in shooting in the early rounds, but fizzled out at the crucial stages," said Sadek.

"After the Sea Games last August, the athletes were not prepared for the higher standard Commonwealth Games by competing in tougher tournaments.

"They were also not prepared, mentally, after the Sea Games success," Sadek told *NST Sport* yesterday.

Sadek said it was a "big joke" when weightlifting, which is not

included in the Podium Programme, handed Malaysia two gold medals and a bronze.

He asked whether the decisions by the National Sports Institute (NSI), National Sports Council (NSC) and officials at the Podium Programme were correct in reflecting the standards of weightlifting in the country?

He also asked how come the performance of high jumper Nauraj Singh, who had received training and exposure in Australia under the Podium Programme, was worse than athletes who had received only exposure and training in Malaysia.

"I feel that the director of Podium Programme (Tim Newenham) failed to take into account our culture in certain sports (in Games). And it looks like those working in sports associations

might not be too happy with his ways and this has to an extent, disrupted the athletes' performances as well.

"Going by our seven-gold haul, it's the same when we did not have the Podium Programme and so, Newenham should take responsibility. And by the standard shown by our athletes in Australia, don't hope for a better show at the Asian Games. Actually, we are only good at South-east Asian level."

Sadek doubts Malaysia can do well in Jakarta, as weightlifting, badminton, diving and artistic gymnastics will face a tougher challenge at the Asian Games.

The four sports were among those who contributed to seven gold medals in Gold Coast and will be depended on again for medals at the Asian Games.

CYCLING
2014 achievement: One bronze, **2018 target:** One medal, **2018 achievement:** No medals

THE viral infection suffered by Azizulhasni Awang affected Malaysia's chances of winning a medal.

The 2014 bronze medallist could only finish sixth in the keirin and had to withdraw from the sprint competition.

Australia, New Zealand and Scotland's riders were clearly better prepared to challenge for the podium spots.

WEIGHTLIFTING
2014 achievement: One gold, one silver, **2018 target:** One gold, one silver or bronze, **2018 achievement:** Two gold and one bronze

MALAYSIA'S weightlifters have never failed on the Commonwealth stage and showed improvement this time.

Azroy Hazal Wafie Izhar Ahmad delivered the nation's first gold at the Games after breaking Amirul Hamizan Ibrahim's national record en route to victory in the men's under-56kg class.

Muhamad Aznil Bidin followed up with a second gold for Malaysia after winning the under-62kg division while Fazrul Azrie Mohdad clinched bronze in the under-85kg class.

The squad broke six national records Down Under. Their performances should give them grounds to appeal for re-inclusion in the Sports Ministry's Core Sports programme.

SQUASH
2014 achievement: One gold, **2018 target:** One medal, **2018 achievement:** One bronze
2010 and 2014 gold medallist Nicol David failed to defend her singles crown and also missed out on bronze after going down

Report card on Malaysian athletes

to Wales' Tesni Evans in the play-off.

Nafiizwan Adnan delivered Malaysia's only medal, a bronze, via the men's singles.

With Nicol now past her best, the younger generation of player must step up at the next edition of the games.

TABLE TENNIS
2014 achievement: No medals, **2018 target:** Quarterfinals, **2018 achievement:** One bronze

WITH Malaysia sending a young squad to the games, not much was expected from the national paddlers.

Women's doubles Ho Ying and Karen Lyne, however, had other ideas and fought their way to a commendable bronze.

LAWN BOWLS
2014 achievement: Two silver, **2018 target:** One gold, **2018 achievement:** One gold

THE national squad arrived in Australia two months earlier to ensure their preparations for the games go smoothly.

A total of six Malaysian teams saw their campaign come to an end at the semi-final stage, which is worrying, especially with them being part of the Podium Programme.

Siti Zalina Ahmad and Emma Firyana Saroji, however, did well to clinch the women's pairs gold, saving the sport the blushes.

ATHLETICS
2014 achievement: No medals, **2018 target:** One medal, **2018 achievement:** One bronze

THE squad should be grateful to para athlete Mohd Afiq Ali Hanafiah for ending the nation's

16-year medal drought at the Commonwealth Games.

Podium Programme athletes Nauraj Singh Randhawa, Mohd Irfan Shamshuddin and Muhammad Hakimi Ismail were disappointing as they performed below what they are capable of.

The women's 4x100m quartet, however, can hold their heads high after becoming the first to reach the final since the 1998 games and 1966 prior to that.

POWERLIFTING
2014 achievement: One bronze, **2018 target:** One gold, **2018 achievement:** One silver

JONG Yee Khie and Bonnie Bunyau Gustin both did the nation proud in Australia.

Yee Khie took silver while World Junior Champion Bonnie showed great promise despite missing out on a bronze.

GYMNASTIC
2014 achievement: One silver, two bronze, **2018 target:** One gold, **2018 achievement:** One gold, three silver and three bronze

THE national rhythmic gymnastic squad put on their best show so far at the Games.

The artistic squad, however, still have some way to go before being capable of challenging the dominant nations in the sport.

BADMINTON
2014 achievement: Three gold, **2018 target:** Three gold, **2018 achievement:** Two gold, one silver and two bronze

IF not for Lee Chong Wei and Vivian Hoo-Chow Mei Kuan's victories on the final day of the com-

petition, the team would have gone home quite embarrassed.

The failure to defend the mixed doubles gold and Goh V Shem-Tan Wee Kiong's semi-final exit should be a clear signal to the BA of Malaysia to start strategising for the next games, especially with Chong Wei now in the twilight of his career.

BASKETBALL
2014 achievement: No medals, **2018 target:** Semi-finals, **2018 achievement:** Group stage
DESPITE winning the Sea Games gold last year, the women's squad were outclassed by their opponents at the Commonwealth Games.

DIVING
2014 achievement: One gold, two silver and one bronze, **2018 target:** One gold, **2018 achievement:** One gold and two bronze

Pandelela Rinong-Cheong Jun Hoong's gold and two bronzes from Nur Dhabitah Sabri-Leong Mun Yee early in the competition gave hope of a strong showing from the team.

It, however, did not materialise and no more medals were won for the remainder of the competition. Former coach Yang Zhu-liang's departure at the end of last year could have been a factor.

SHOOTING
2014 achievement: One bronze, **2018 target:** One Gold, **2018 achievement:** One bronze
MALAYSIA cannot continue to depend on old faces to deliver the goods at the Commonwealth Games.

Alia Sazana Azahari, who

clinched bronze in the women's 25m pistol, showed great consistency during the tournament as her teammates faltered.

SWIMMING
2014 achievement: No medals, **2018 target:** None, **2018 achievement:** No medals

NOT much was expected of the national swimmers as they were up against some of the best in the world. Welson Sim, however, did make the final in his event while Tern Jian Han showed good potential.

HOCKEY
2014 achievement: Men (seventh), women (seventh), **2018 target:** Men (sixth), women (sixth), **2018 achievement:** Men (fifth), women (eighth)

MISSING several key players, men's coach Stephen Van Huizen was forced to test a number of new faces and they did not disappoint as they finished fifth.

The women's team, however, did not fare as well and were forced to settle for eighth.

RUGBY
2014 achievement: Last, **2018 target:** Top 12, **2018 achievement:** Failed to progress from group stage

THE national squad had intended to use the games as part of their preparation for the Indonesia Asian Games later this year. As expected, they were routed by Scotland, South Africa and Papua New Guinea, and only managed a solitary try through Muhammad Firdaus Tarmizi.

TRIATHLON
2014 achievement: Did not compete, **2018 target:** None, **2018 achievement:** No medals
BOTH the Malaysian competitors struggled to make an impact in the competition.