

No golden ticket

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Winning one won't guarantee place in Podium Programme

By LIM TEIK HUAT

KUALA LUMPUR: Gold at the Kuala Lumpur SEA Games next month will not guarantee an athlete inclusion into the Podium Programme.

However, those already under the Podium Programme have to deliver the gold to justify their presence.

National Sports Institute (NSI) chief executive officer Dr Mohd Khairi Zawi said that Podium Programme athletes would be competing alongside those from the Kita Juara programme, which comes under the National Sports Council (NSC).

"Expectations are on the Podium Programme athletes to deliver as they are given the best care in terms of sports science support, training and exposure to high-level competitions.

"But for athletes not in the Podium Programme, winning the SEA Games gold is not the criteria for entry.

"We will review the Podium Programme before the year is over and the criteria for selection is to be ranked inside the top 10 at the Asian or Commonwealth countries' level," he said.

Khairil Hafiz Jantan, who broke Tan Sri Dr M. Jegathesan's 49-year-old national 200m record of 20.92 after clocking 20.90 at the Malaysian Open athletics championships at the National Stadium in Bukit Jalil on Tuesday, may not be considered for the Podium Programme even if he wins gold at the KL Games unless he wins a medal at the Asian level.

A total of 180 athletes applied to



A new icon

The Youth and Sports Ministry Hari Raya Open House took place yesterday with the iconic Axiata Arena in Bukit Jalil as its backdrop. Youth and Sports Minister Khairy Jamaluddin played host while Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi also graced the function. The newly-rebranded Axiata Arena (previously known as Putra Stadium) will host the badminton competition at the Kuala Lumpur SEA Games from Aug 22-29.

The Axiata Arena is seen as the crown jewel of phase one of the RM500mil upgrading project of the KL Sports City in Bukit Jalil. The hope is for Axiata Arena to eventually be on par with the world-renowned Staples Centre in Los Angeles, O2 Arena in London and Mercedes Benz Arena in Shanghai. — ART CHEN / The Star

join the Podium Programme, but only 117 were selected for this year.

Among the sports Khairi considers as having produced consistent performances are badminton, diving, swimming, track cycling, bowling, archery and lawn bowls.

The Podium Programme was set up with the aim of delivering the nation's first gold medal at the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo.

World keirin cycling champion Azizulhasni Awang and divers Cheong Jun Hoong-Pandelela

Rinong, who took bronze at the World Aquatics Championships in Budapest, Hungary, on Sunday, are among the high-profile athletes from the Podium Programme who will be going for gold at the KL Games.