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Power to Bonnie!

Sarawakian gets big lift before bid to make C'wealth Games history

By LIM TEIK HUAT

PETALING JAYA: Powerlifter Bonnie Bunyau Gustin showed he is ready to shoulder the challenge to become the first Malaysian para athlete gold medallist in Commonwealth Games history after a dominant performance in the World Para Powerlifting Regional Championships in Pyeongtaek, South Korea.

The Tokyo Paralympics reigning champion, who just turned 23 on June 3, crushed the field to take four gold medals in the men's below 72kg category yesterday.

Bonnie's best lift of 213kg was a massive 13kg heavier than second-placed competitor Hu Peng of China. Bonnie already secured the gold with his first lift of 203kg before he increased the weight to 209kg for his second attempt. He duly cleared the second and finished off the day with 213kg for the final lift.

Bonnie won the overall category with his total of 625kg ahead of 2019 world champion and two-time Paralympic medallist Hu Peng, who finished with 583kg.

Bonnie also claimed the Asian and Oceania titles for a clean sweep of all four categories at stake.

Uzbekistan's Oltiev Yashinbek took bronze in the overall category with a total of 520kg.

Bonnie was pleased to turn up with a strong performance, considering it was only his first competi-



Impressive feat: Bonnie Bunyau Gustin (centre) posing with his gold medals won in the men's below 72kg in the World Para Powerlifting Regional Championships in Pyeongtaek. He is flanked by China's Hu Peng (left) and Uzbekistan's Oltiev Yashinbek.

tion this year.

"I'm happy to do better than my performance at the world championships end of last year.

"It's only my first competition this year and I will focus on the Commonwealth Games after this.

"Hopefully, it will turn out well

and I can contribute for Malaysia," said Bonnie, who will also make history as the first national para athlete to carry the Malaysian flag in the marchpast of the opening ceremony at the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham next month.

At the world meet in Tbilisi,

Georgia, last year, the Sarawak-born Bonnie successfully retained his crown with a 210kg lift.

Bonnie is also the current world record holder in his category with 230kg, which he achieved at the Powerlifting World Cup in Dubai last year.