

# MALAYSIAN ATHLETES TO WATCH IN BIRMINGHAM

The national contingent of 104 athletes will compete in 14 sports at the Commonwealth Games, where the target is six gold

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**H**ERE are the nation's 12 athletes to watch in Birmingham.

**BONNIE BUNYAU GUSTIN (POWERLIFTING)**

BONNIE, one of two flag bearers of the contingent, will be out to dominate the men's lightweight contest, given his credentials as the reigning Paralympic gold medallist and world champion.

The 23-year-old, however, is not 100 per cent fit and has yet to recover from a shoulder injury.

Bonnie said he is focused on winning the gold and will do just enough with no aim to rewrite his world record of 230kg.

If he succeeds, he will become the first Malaysian champion in para-sports in the history of the games. In Gold Coast four years ago, Bonnie could only finish fourth.



double assault on both gold medals in synchro events.

While Dhabitah seems more likely to gain victory with Pandelega in the 10m platform synchro, she and Wendy Ng will have to produce something special for the top spot in the 3m springboard synchro, with Australia's Maddison Keeney-Anabelle Smith being the favourites.

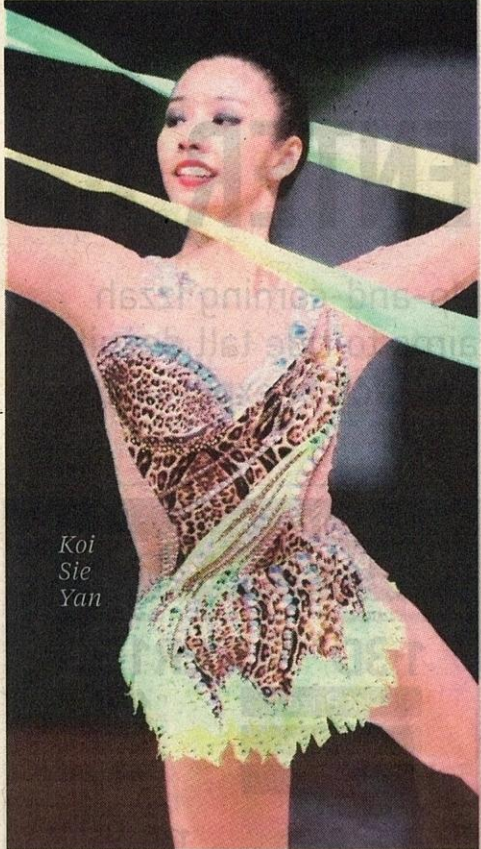
She will also compete in the springboard individual and mixed synchro with Gabriel Gilbert Daim.

It will be Dhabitah's third games with her best outing recorded eight years ago in Glasgow when she won the platform synchro bronze with Pandelega.

**KOI SIE YAN (RHYTHMIC GYMNASTICS)**

WITH senior Amy Kwan no longer in the team, all eyes will be on Sie Yan to deliver the goods in rhythmic gymnastics.

The 23-year-old certainly has what it takes to shine in her second games following a memorable debut in the Gold



*Koi Sie Yan*

Aznil, who triumphed in the men's 62kg four years ago, will be competing in the 61kg category this time.

But his target remains the same — which is — to come out tops once again.

Aznil underlined his credentials by winning the 61kg event at the Commonwealth Championships.

Amirul Hamizan Ibrahim is Malaysia's only Commonwealth Games multiple gold

**AARON CHIA-SOH WOUI YIK  
(BADMINTON)**

THE “nearly men” of world badminton may have yet to win an “Open” title, but the world No 6 have the knack of raising their game in multi-sport events.

Aaron-Wooi Yik aim to add a third games medal after bagging gold at the 2019 Philippines Sea Games and bronze at the Tokyo Olympics last year.

Their main rivals in Birmingham are India’s Thomas Cup heroes Satwiksairaj Rankireddy-Chirag Shetty and England’s Sean Vandy-Ben Lane.

Malaysia were the undisputed champions of the men’s doubles event since the 1990 edition before Goh V Shem-Tan Wee Kiong lost it four years ago.

Hopes are high on Aaron-Wooi Yik to reclaim the title.

**PEARLY TAN-M. THINAAH  
(BADMINTON)**

BASED on their recent results, the world No 11 could pull off a golden Commonwealth Games debut if they play to their standard.

Pearly-Thinaah have been producing several high-profile upsets of late, including two stunning wins over world No 2 Yuki Fukushima-Sayaka Hirota of Japan.

England’s world No 14 Lauren Smith-Chloe Birch, the second highest ranked pair in the competition, will be Pearly-Thinaah’s biggest obstacle to the title.

**PANDELELA RINONG  
(DIVING)**

PANDELELA has won medals in every major competition in the world, and she will be fired up to make an impression in Birmingham, especially after her stunning



show at the recent World Championships in Budapest.

The reigning World Cup champion won two bronze in the women’s 10m platform individual and synchro (with Nur Dhabitah Sabri) at the world meet.

The absences of Australia’s Melissa Wu and Canada’s Meaghan Benfeito are a blessing as the Malaysian is now a favourite for the platform individual gold.

Pandelela also stands to achieve back-to-back wins in the synchro if she succeeds with Dhabitah in Birmingham.

Pandelela had won gold in the event with the retired Cheong Jun Hoong in the Gold Coast.

She also has a good chance of another podium finish in the platform mixed synchro with youngster Jellson Jabillin.

**NUR DHABITAH SABRI  
(DIVING)**

THE 23-year-old will be busy in Birmingham as she will be competing in four events.

Known for her versatility in both platform and springboard disciplines, Dhabitah is expected to play an instrumental role if Malaysia are to pull off a

winning a memorable debut in the Gold Coast.

Sie Yan gave a good account of herself by amassing a commendable haul of four medals, but none were gold.

Having won silver in clubs, ball and team and bronze in the ribbon, she will be eager to turn at least one of them into gold this time.

Sie Yan had a perfect warm-up by winning the individual all-around event at the Hanoi Sea Games in May.

**ANIQ KASDAN  
(WEIGHTLIFTING)**

MALAYSIA have always won something in the sport at the games since Hidayat Hamidon’s gold-medal exploits at the 1998 Kuala Lumpur edition.

Aniq, who will be competing in the men’s 55kg, is likely to follow in the footsteps of Hidayat and other former champions, Amirul Hamizan Ibrahim, Faizal Baharom, Aricco Jumitih, Hafifi Mansor, Azroy Hazalwafie Izhar and Aznil Bidin, in Birmingham.

The debutant will enter the competition as one of the favourites, having claimed a historic silver at the World Championships in Tashkent in December last year.

The meet doubled up as a Commonwealth Championships event, with 20-year-old Aniq winning gold with a combined effort of 249kg to beat Uganda’s Davis Niyoyita by 29kg.

Niyoyita will be Aniq’s biggest threat in Birmingham:

**AZNIL BIDIN  
(WEIGHTLIFTING)**

THE 28-year-old will be on a mission to become the first Malaysian weightlifter to achieve back-to-back victories in the games.

only Commonwealth Games multiple gold medallist, but he did not achieve it in two successive editions, with his victories coming in 2002 (Manchester) and 2010 (New Delhi).

**SHAH FIRDAUS SAHROM  
(TRACK CYCLING)**

WITH Azizulhasni Awang out of the equation, Shah Firdaus will carry Malaysia’s hopes in cycling. The games will offer the cyclist a chance to prove his worth as a worthy successor to Azizulhasni.

No doubt, it will be a tall order for the 26-year-old to win gold, but a medal is certainly within reach, particularly in the keirin, where anything is possible.

Shah will also be in action in the 1km time trial individual sprint and team sprint.

If Shah does better than winning a bronze, he will surpass Azizulhasni’s achievements (of two bronze in total) and become Malaysia’s most successful cyclist at the games.

**SITI ZALINA AHMAD  
(LAWN BOWLS)**

THE 43-year-old is the only surviving member of the Jaya 98 programme still active in sports.

It will be Siti’s seventh Commonwealth Games, and she hopes to nail her fourth title in Birmingham.

The Perak-born won the singles gold at the 2002 Manchester and 2006 Melbourne editions, and 12 years after her last success, she took the pairs gold with Emma Firiyana Saroji in the Gold Coast.

The team will surely count on Siti and Emma to deliver again in Birmingham.

She will also aim to pursue individual glory in the singles.