

Pandelela is sportswoman of the year, third time for Chong Wei

By LIM TEIK HUAT

KUALA LUMPUR: Shuttler Lee Chong Wei, as expected, bagged his third National Sportsman Award, thanks largely to his achievement of winning seven international titles apart from reaching the World Championships final in 2011.

Pandelela Rinong sprang a big surprise by capturing the National Sportswoman Award, making her the first diver to earn the country's highest accolade for athletes.

Pandelela beat the likes of squash queen Nicol David, shooter Nur Suryani Mohd Taibi, bowler Jacqueline Sijore and track cyclist Fatehah Mustapa to claim the RM20,000 prize money.

World No. 1 Nicol enjoyed a fantastic season with seven international titles on the WISPA circuit, including a record equalling sixth World Open title in Holland last year.

Track cyclist Azizulhasni Awang and Nicol were the respective winners for 2010 but the selection panel opted for Pandelela due to her breakthrough achievements in 2011.

Pandelela became the first Malaysian to win a medal at the FINA Diving World Series when she claimed the silver in the 10m platform individual at the opening leg in Moscow.

She also partnered Leong Mun Yee to a silver in the 10m platform synchro in the Beijing leg of the series, which is by invitation only to the top eight ranked divers in the world.

Pandelela also did the country proud with two medals at the World University Games in Shenzhen – in the 10m platform individual and with Mun Yee in the synchro discipline.

The silver is the best result by a Malaysian athlete in Universiade history.

The 19-year-old Sarawakian also pulled off another first with Mun Yee in bagging gold in

Roll of honour

NATIONAL SPORTSMAN FOR 2011

Lee Chong Wei (*Badminton*)

NATIONAL SPORTSWOMAN

Pandelela Rinong (*Diving*)

NATIONAL MEN'S TEAM

Cheng Chu Sian, Khairul Anuar Mohamad, Haziq Kamaruddin (*Archery*)

NATIONAL WOMEN'S TEAM

Katrina Ann Hadi, Png Hui Chuen, Lee Zhien Huey, Yeo Pei Ling, Tan May Mei, Mandy Yeap, Tasha Jane, Gan Zhen Yu, Lee Yhing Huey, Emanuelle Mah (*Synchronised Swimming*)

NATIONAL PARALYMPIAN SPORTSMAN

Mohd Salam Sidik (*Archery*)

NATIONAL PARALYMPIAN SPORTSWOMAN

Hemala Devi (*Athletics*)

NATIONAL MEN'S COACH

Syed Mohd Hussaini Mazlan (*Cycling*)

NATIONAL WOMEN'S COACH

Rosniza Abu Bakar (*Rhythmic Gymnastics*)

LEADERSHIP AWARD

Datuk Seri Kee Yong Wee (*Wushu*)

SPECIAL AWARD

Shaharudin Jaafar (*Cycling*)

the platform synchro at the German Open, making them the first diving pair to win at the World Grand Prix circuit.

Pandelela also retained her 10m platform individual, the only event she was entered for, title with ease at the Indonesia SEA Games.

Pandelela herself, expressed shock but delight at winning the National Sportswoman

Award for the first time.

"Are you sure? I was also nominated for the award last year after winning the New Delhi Commonwealth Games gold medal and the Youth Olympic Games two silver medals in Singapore.

"But it was Nicol who won. I expected her to do it again as her achievements were great last year.

"I'm very surprised, but I was kind of hoping I could be the winner as I was asked to come back after the Moscow competition to attend the Awards ceremony.

"I'm happy to get a big recognition for diving," said the Olympic-bound Pandelela, who took bronze in the FINA Diving World Series in Moscow last weekend.

Pandelela will fly to Tijuana, Mexico, today to join Mun Yee for the final round of the series.

Chong Wei said winning a third award after 2005 and 2008 will spur him to deliver glory for the country at the London Olympics in August.

"I came close in Beijing four years ago and I'm more mature now.

"This award is a boost to my dream of bringing home Malaysia's first Olympic gold medal," said Chong Wei.

The 10-member synchronised swimming team led by Katrina Ann Hadi got the nod for the national women's team award based on their clean sweep of all five gold medals at stake in the Indonesia SEA Games.

The men's recurve trio of Chu Sian, Khairul and Haziq was the choice for the men's team award due to their feat of earning the country the maximum Olympic quota for archery after qualifying for the team event at the World Championships in Italy last year.

Katrina-Hui Chuen out to gain recognition for synchronised swimming

KUALA LUMPUR: Getting more recognition for synchronised swimming will be uppermost in the minds of Katrina Ann Hadi and Png Hui Chuen when they make the plunge in the Olympic qualifier at the London Aquatic Centre starting today.

The duo, with Lee Zhien Huey as the reserve, were not in town to share in the joy of winning the 2011 National Women's Team Award last night due to their campaign in London.

Katrina and Hui Chuen, who played pivotal roles in helping the synchronised swimming team make a clean sweep of all the five gold medals in the Indonesia SEA Games last year,

are hoping to beat the odds to win a place in the Olympics in August.

Synchronised swimming offers eight spots for the team event and 24 for the duet.

Five of the eight quota spots for the team event were determined at the World Championships in Shanghai last year with Britain (host/Europe), China (Asia), Egypt (Africa), Canada (America) and Australia (Oceania) booking their berths.

These five teams are assured places in the duet as well which means only 19 spots are up for grabs.

Malaysia have never competed in synchro-

nised swimming at the Olympic level and Katrina-Hui Chuen need to finish among the top 16 to get in automatically.

If they fail, there is still a second chance as they will compete in the swim-off for the three remaining places.

Malaysia are only competing in the duet, and not the team event, due to the gap in technical skills compared to the rest of the world.

Katrina and Hui Chuen finished 26th in the last Olympic qualifiers in Beijing four years ago but have since raised their level of difficulties.