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Bowlers deliver Malaysia's first gold (HL)

Zakri Baharudin

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - Bowlers Kenny Ang and Ben Heng made it a memorable day when they set the Pyramid Bowl lanes ablaze for Malaysia's first gold of the Commonwealth Games in the doubles event today.

The left-handers, backed by the solid crowd support at the 48-lane Pyramid Bowl, made a total of 3,552 pinfalls in the eight-game final to beat the second-placed Bermuda pair of Antoine Jones and Conrad Lister by a comfortable 223-pin margin.

Earlier, Australians Cara Honeychurch and Maxine Nable did well to win the women's doubles gold, upstaging local favourites Shalin Zukifli and Lai Kin Ngoh by a convincing 130-pin margin.

Shooters Abdul Mutalib Razak, Mohamed Emran Zakaria, Bibiana Ng and Norsita Mahmud gave Malaysia a great start when they won a silver and a bronze between them at the Langkawi International Shooting range in the morning.

Though they are not gold, the shooting medals are significant because they are the first ever won by Malaysia in the Commonwealth Games series.

For Ang and Heng, Malaysia's leading bowling pair, it was a splendid showing, making up for the silver medal effort by Shalin and Kin Ngoh.

Heng's average was the highest in the men's field with 225.63, while veteran Ang blasted 1,747 to make up the total.

Even Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad dropped by to lend support to the keglers during the fifth game of the tournament.

Dr Mahathir, who later visited the Kelana Jaya Stadium, the venue for the Games rugby sevens tournament, said:

"We are very proud and grateful that we have managed to get the first gold medal today through the bowling event."

The Prime Minister, who also congratulated the the shooters for their splendid efforts in Langkawi, said: "We hope to get more medals even in events for which medals are not expected."

Bermudans Jones and Lister came from behind to rob Australians Michael Muir and Francis Ryan of the silver. The Australians totalled 3,229.

"We were a little pressured as we wanted bowling to deliver Malaysia's first gold medal," said the 24-year-old Heng who has seven years bowling experience.

"But we have reached our target now that we've won two medals. We hope to win more and anything else after this would be a bonus.

"This win is very meaningful to me as it's my first gold medal in an official tournament.

"We hope this will continue till the end," he added.

Bowling, which is making its Games debut with five other team sports, offers a total of five golds - men's and women's singles and doubles and mixed doubles.

The mixed doubles is scheduled for tomorrow and the two-day singles competition is scheduled to begin on Tuesday.

Ang, who has been a member of the national squad since 1980, said the victory reflected the national spirit of Malaysia Boleh.

"Now we have proven that we don't only say Malaysia Boleh, we have actually done it," said the 45-year-old Ang.

"But I couldn't have achieved this it without Ben (Heng), who has been great, and the crowd was simply magnificent," Ang added.

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