

Aqilah sets new national record, and two golds to boot in Sukma

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The Star



Aqilah (centre) celebrating with her Terengganu team-mates after winning the 70m recurve event at Unimas ground. - FAIHAN GHANI / The Star

KUCHING: Archer Nur Aqilah Yusof of Terengganu was offered a place in the national team in January.

But she turned it down to focus on the Sukma. The decision was spot-on as she became the first athlete to set a national record of these Games as well as winner of two golds.

The 17-year-old accumulated 331 points to shatter the 13-year-old national record in the women's 70m recurve at the Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas) ground. She improved her personal best by 11 points.

Aqilah's efforts erased the previous record of 328 set by Mon Redee Sut Txi at the 2003 Vietnam SEA Games.

Aqilah also broke the Sukma record of 309 set by Nur Afisa Abdul Halil of Negri Sembilan in Kangar two years ago.

Kedah's Farah Amalina Azhar won the silver with 320 points while Nur Afisa bagged the bronze with a 309 total.

Aqilah, who took up the sport four years ago, was surprised to shatter the national record.

"My mission here was just to do better than my last Sukma in Kangar. Then, I failed to win any medals. Breaking the national record was the last thing on my mind," said Aqilah, a Form Five student of SMK Kompleks Mengabang Telipot in Kuala Terengganu.

"I was not even the favourite. But I managed to improve my personal best because of the hard training over the last two years.

"I am delighted to break the national record. I think I have a bright future in archery. I will only join the national team after my Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) examinations in November," said Aqilah, who also won the 60m recurve with a score of 328.

Three other archers also broke the Sukma records.

Muhamad Ikram Joni of Kelantan, who was dropped from the Rio de Janeiro Olympics last month, shattered the men's 90m recurve record with a 310 total. The previous record of 296 was set by Mohd Aidid Azizi of Perlis in Kangar in 2014.

Sabah's Wong Co Wan broke Kelantanese Mohd Khairul Azam Hashim's 2014 record by one point after registering 330 in the men's individual 90m compound.

The third record was shattered by Kho Yee Ting of Sarawak in the women's 70m compound. She chalked up 342 points to beat the 340 mark set by Saritha Cham Nong of Perak in Malacca in 2010.