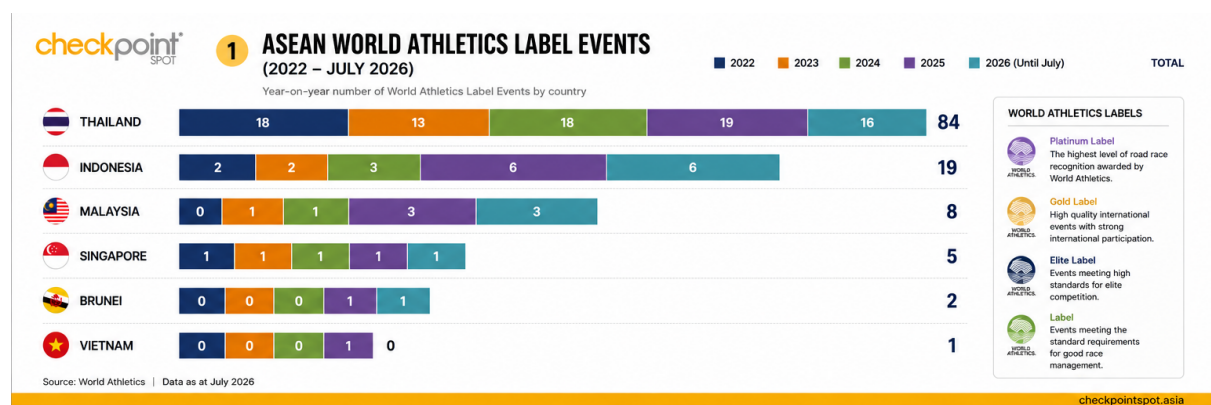


Malaysia Has the Running Courses. Now We Need the Will to Build World-Class Events.

By Benjamin Yeow
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Over the past decade, road running has grown from a recreational activity into an important part of Southeast Asia's sporting and tourism economy.

As the data shows (see infographic below), while Malaysia is making steady progress, our neighbours are setting a blistering pace in securing World Athletics Labels.



Across ASEAN, races are attracting international participants, driving sports tourism, showcasing cities and creating new opportunities for local communities. From Bangkok to Bali, major races are becoming annual events that runners plan their calendars around.

Malaysia has every reason to be part of this success story.

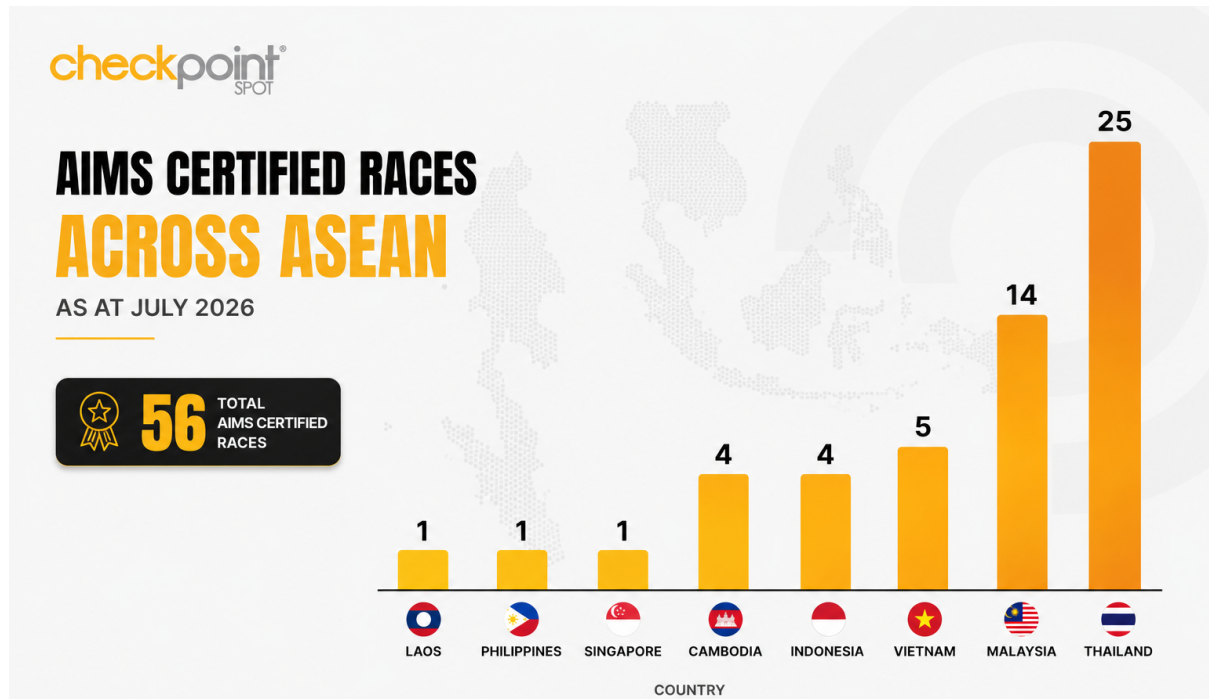
In fact, the foundations are already in place.

Today, Malaysia has the second-highest number of AIMS-certified road race courses in ASEAN, reflecting years of dedication by race organisers, course measurers, volunteers and local authorities who have worked tirelessly to raise professional standards. That achievement deserves recognition because internationally certified courses are the starting point of every world-class road race.



The question now is not whether Malaysia has the capability.

The question is how we take the next step together.



The Next Stage of Growth

When people talk about international road races, two certifications are often mentioned.

The first is AIMS certification, which verifies that a course has been accurately measured according to international standards.

The second is the World Athletics Label programme.

While the two are related, they recognise different achievements.

AIMS confirms the quality of the course.

World Athletics Labels recognise the overall quality of the event—its elite athlete field, anti-doping standards, international broadcasting, prize structures and organisational excellence.

One represents infrastructure.

The other represents the maturity of the entire event ecosystem.

Neither is more important than the other.



Both are necessary.

ASEAN Shows Different Models of Success

Looking across Southeast Asia, each country offers valuable lessons rather than a ranking.

Thailand demonstrates what sustained long-term investment can achieve. Over many years, it has developed a broad portfolio of Label races while nurturing Bangsaen21 into ASEAN's only Platinum Label event.

Singapore shows how a single flagship race can become an internationally recognised sporting brand.

Indonesia provides another interesting example. Having started from a similar certification base only a few years ago, it has expanded its portfolio of Label races through steady investment and collaboration across multiple stakeholders.

These are not stories of competition.

They are examples of how different countries have approached the same objective—creating internationally recognised running events.

Malaysia Already Has Strong Foundations

One point is often overlooked.

Malaysia's race organisers have already built something significant.

The country has one of the strongest portfolios of internationally measured courses in ASEAN.

That foundation did not appear overnight.

It represents years of investment, operational excellence and dedication by organisers, technical officials, volunteers, local councils, sponsors and countless people working behind the scenes.

As someone who has had the privilege of supporting races across Malaysia and several ASEAN countries, I know firsthand the amount of work required simply to organise a successful event.

No race organiser needs to be told that building a World Athletics Label race is challenging.

They live those challenges every year.



Building a World-Class Race Is an Ecosystem Effort

One misconception is that achieving higher World Athletics recognition depends solely on the organiser.

In reality, many of the requirements lie beyond the organiser's direct control.

International broadcasting.

Elite athlete recruitment.

Long-term prize money commitments.

Anti-doping programmes.

International marketing.

Destination promotion.

These require sustained investment and close collaboration among race organisers, sponsors, tourism agencies, government bodies, broadcasters, athletics federations and commercial partners.

No single organisation can build a Platinum or Gold Label race alone.

It is an ecosystem achievement.

Without this coordinated approach, we risk missing the window of opportunity to convert our growing runner base into a premier global sports tourism destination.

The Opportunity Ahead

Rather than asking why Malaysia has fewer higher-tier races than some of its neighbours, perhaps a better question is this:

What would it take for Malaysia to produce its next internationally recognised flagship race?

The answer is unlikely to come from one organisation.

It will come from stronger partnerships.

From sponsors who see long-term value in endurance sports.

From tourism agencies that recognise races as destination marketing platforms.



From broadcasters who bring local events to international audiences.

From government bodies that view endurance events as contributors to tourism, health and economic activity.

And from technology providers, service partners and race organisers continuing to innovate together.

A Shared Ambition

Malaysia does not need every race to become a World Athletics Gold or Platinum Label event.

Nor should every organiser pursue the same goals.

But as an industry, I believe we can share one common ambition:

To see Malaysia produce more races that earn international recognition and attract runners from around the world.

That ambition belongs to all of us.

Race organisers.

Athletics officials.

Sponsors.

Government agencies.

Technology partners.

Volunteers.

And the running community itself.

Running Forward Together

The data tells us that Malaysia has already built strong foundations.

The next chapter is not about comparing ourselves with our neighbours.

It is about learning from one another, strengthening collaboration and creating an environment where internationally recognised races can flourish.



At CheckPointSpot, we are committed to facilitating these conversations. We invite race organizers, tourism stakeholders, and government agencies to connect—not just to share best practices, but to build the roadmap for Malaysia's next major international race.

After all, world-class races are never built by one organisation.

They are built by an entire community with a shared vision.