

# YOUNGSTERS STEP UP TO THE FORE

Farhan, 17, is Republic's only hope for world silat gold after Suhaila's silver

By CHUA SIANG YEE

ON A day when Singapore's silat world champion Shakir Juanda was beaten, two youngsters softened the blow at the ongoing Pencak Silat World Championships in Phuket yesterday.

Nurul Suhaila Mohamed Saiful, 19, and Sheik Farhan Sheik Alau'ddin, 17, ensured Singapore will walk away with at least two more silvers, even as Shakir, 27, the Class I (85-90kg) champion of 2012, lost his Class H (80-85kg) semi-final to Indonesia's Tri Juanda Samsul Bahar at the Saphan Hin Sports Centre.

Suhaila missed out on her first world title - and Singapore's first gold at this year's tournament - when she lost to Indonesian Selly Andriani 0-5 in the women's Class D (60-65kg) final yesterday afternoon.

Farhan thus becomes Singapore's remaining hope, after he beat Malaysia's Azrul Abdullah 4-1 in the Class J (90-95kg) semi-finals yesterday. With at least a silver medal assured, he will take on Vietnam's Mach Quoc Hung in tomorrow's final.

For Suhaila, it was an improvement from her bronze-medal showing at the 2012 World Championships in Chiang Rai.

She told The Straits Times in a phone interview: "In the last round, I was one point behind. But I tried too hard to land a kick and fell instead, giving my opponent three points. It was my biggest final, and nerves got the better of me. I wasn't confident and hesitated a lot.

"But it is a good learning experience. Now I know where I stand. I'm close to being a world champion, and I'm motivated to train



Nurul Suhaila (left), 19, missed out on her first world title but Sheik Farhan, 17, will have his shot at glory tomorrow. PHOTOS: BH FILE, COURTESY OF PERSISI

even harder."

With the SEA Games coming up in June, Suhaila might cross paths with her final opponent An-

driani again. Said the Ngee Ann Polytechnic student, who picked up the sport when she was six: "I'd do better the next time. The

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## GETTING THERE

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## POINT TO PROVE

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- Sheik Farhan

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outcome will be different."

Farhan, who is making his world championships debut, has pedigree - his father is former si-

lat world champion Sheik Alau'ddin, chief executive officer of Singapore Silat Federation.

Said the Nanyang Polytechnic student, who won despite nursing a swollen shin: "After Shakir lost, I felt responsible for winning a gold for Singapore, and was extra motivated going into my match.

"Everything went to plan - I took the lead early and was able to control the match."

Having missed out on a spot in the silat national squad for June's SEA Games, Farhan hopes a gold in Phuket will convince the selectors he is up for the task. He said: "Before the semi-final, my dad told me this was a chance to make a name for myself. So I hope a win here can show I am good enough (for the SEA Games). I know I am (Singapore's) only hope for gold, but I'd channel the pressure into something positive."

Singapore's 20-man squad have three silvers and four bronzes from the world championships, which end on Saturday.

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