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Description:	Feature on Singaporean World Silat Champion and former national SEA Games great Sheik Alau'ddin, now 47 who shares with TNP readers his road to success in the sport with a focus on his most cherished accomplishment when he delivered Singapore's 50th gold medal at the 1993 edition of the Games on home soil - when the Republic's athletes delivered Singapore's best ever medal haul at the biennial Games.					

CHINESE NEW YEAR SPECIAL

# AN UNFORGETTABLE BATTLE

He is a two-time world champion, but Sheik's SEA Games win in 1993 occupies a unique place in his heart

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It is the most cherished of Sheik Alau'ddin's four South-east Asia (SEA) Games gold medals.

He also owns two world titles, but that win on home soil in 1993 stands out for the silat icon, perhaps because the journey to glory was hardly a straightforward one.

He was one of three Singapore SEA Games stars selected to sit down with The New Paper for a Chinese New Year series talking about their exploits and, just like football hero Quah Kim Lye and sprinter U K Skyan, Sheik's tale was a compelling one.

The 47-year-old took TNP back 22 years and said with a smile: "I remember everything so well. Just 10 days before the altar events was scheduled to start, I injured myself very badly."

"I was then working (as a fitness co-ordinator) at the HDB Planning and Development Board and I was one of their torchbearers as the country built up to the Games."

"As luck would have it, during my run, I rolled over my ankle and it became badly swollen."

Sheik chuckled, recalling how his coaches tried everything to make sure he was ready to defend the gold he'd won in 1991 in Manila.

One secret by a traditional massage, aggressively kneaded his injured ankle.

Another insisted the best way was a "modern" approach - and proceeded to give his ankle several jobs of low voltage electricity.

**LEKONGGRASS TREATMENT**  
Even his mother-in-law got involved in the rehabilitation process.

"She put crushed lemongrass (lemongrass) on my ankle, because people in the olden days believed that was the best way to reduce swelling," he said.

"I remember marching into the National Stadium with Team Singapore during the opening ceremony. I had the crushed lemongrass strapped to my right ankle."

"I was trying to hide my injury, so I made sure my limp wasn't too obvious."

"But the pain wasn't the most irritating thing, it was the dampness from the crushed lemongrass that bothered me most!"

Many will call it lucky, but the remedy appeared to work.

Then, weighing around 90kg, Sheik took part in the Open category, which allows any silat exponent over 18kg to compete.

His first match was against a Thai fighter who was 20kg lighter than him and, although he saw off the challenge without much fuss, he realised the next day that he had endured a fair amount of damage.

"During the match, he kept kicking my thigh, but I won thanks to my size, because I was able to throw him many times," said Sheik.

"The next day when I woke up, I felt as if I could not walk. When I looked at my thigh, I was

shocked to see a few red welts down the side. It was as though I had been caned."

The stars soon went away and Sheik met a familiar rival in the semi-final, Malaysia's Asan Mohdraz.

"The Malaysian guy was funny," said Sheik.

"He lauded me many times before and never managed to beat me, so I had the psychological advantage."

"And in the first and second round, I whipped him good. Then, before the third round, we shook hands and he told me: 'Eh, you won already. Don't hit so hard.'"

"So I went a bit easier on him, but he started whacking me and I soon realised he was trying to make me

complain, and I managed to recover."

"I met him last month at the World Championships in Phuket as he was the coach of the Malaysian team and we had a good laugh over the incident."

Into the final, the only thing that stood between Sheik and the cherished gold was Indonesian's Haryanto Wirawan.

"But, it wasn't the opponent that had Sheik a bit twitzy."

"There was quite a bit of pressure on me, because my final was one of the last events of the Games," he said.

"Before my final, the Singapore Sports Council (now Sport Singapore) people told me I had to win because they had planned to make me the flagbearer for the closing ceremony."

"Even Randi Ahmad told me he was waiting for my gold medal to wrap up Team Singapore's total. So I was really fired up to win."

He didn't have much trouble defeating Wirawan and Sheik's feat helped Singapore hit the 50 gold mark, better their previous best of 45 when the country first hosted the Games in 1971.

The feat cemented his status as one of Singapore's sports stars, in an era where top sportmen were shipped out the streets for anti-social behaviour.

Football had Fandi. Swimming had Amy Peng Song and Jocelyn Yeo. Silat had Sheik.

Said Sheik: "It was a great feeling then."

"Not many people know this, but the camaraderie we had was great."

"When we went overseas for multi-sport tournaments, we always supported one another in every way we could."

"I remember the whole altar squad went down to support table tennis player Ling Junjing in her final at the 1993 SEA Games."

"So when athletes from that era meet these days, it's always nice to talk about the good old days."

"And that's what I hope our athletes today will enjoy about June's SEA Games, too."

SEA GAMES

SHEIK'S SEA GAMES HAUL

• 1989: Silver

• 1991: Gold

• 1993: Gold

• 1997: Silver

• 1999: Gold



## Sheik targets two golds in June

The last time the South-east Asia (SEA) Games were held here in 1993, pencak silat contributor two golds, five silvers and three bronze medals to Singapore's overall medal haul.

While he is unsure if the sport will bring home 10 medals again when the 2015 SEA Games roll into town in June, Singapore Silat Federation (SSF) chief Sheik Alau'ddin is targeting a local presence in four final.

"It's hard to say how many we can win," he told The New Paper, on the sidelines of a national team training session at Persari's headquarters in Bedok earlier in the week.

"The silat competition in 1993 saw a full complement of 21 categories. This time round, there are only 14."

"Of course, nothing is impossible. I'm looking at two golds."

Alau (Javanese) and Shaik (Minangkabau) - and two others in the final.

"That would be a good achievement."

Nigerian student Alfan, 34, is the reigning SEA Games champion in the Class F (70kg/75kg) category, after he beat then-world champion Pham Van Ty in the final.

Shaik (above, left), meanwhile, won the world title in the Class H (80-85kg) title at the 2012 World Championships.

Sheik, 47, was one of Singapore's two gold-medal winners 22 years ago, the other being Hidayat Husain.

He assured his athletes needed to positively channel the pressure of performing in front of a home crowd.

He recounted his own experience of having his wife - then five months pregnant with the couple's first child - unexpectedly turn up during his final at the Yu Chu Kung Sports Hall against Indonesia's Haryanto Wirawan.

"Our guys should tell themselves this is a chance to show their countrymen that they are the real deal," said Sheik.

"Some people may still have doubts over your achievements, because all they see are newspaper articles or short clips on the internet. But this time, they can see for themselves."

"So our guys must use this, plus the fact their families and friends will be watching on and supporting them, as a motivation."

**FARHAN WON'T COMPETE**  
Sheik is resigned to the fact his third son Sheik Farhan will not compete at the Games.

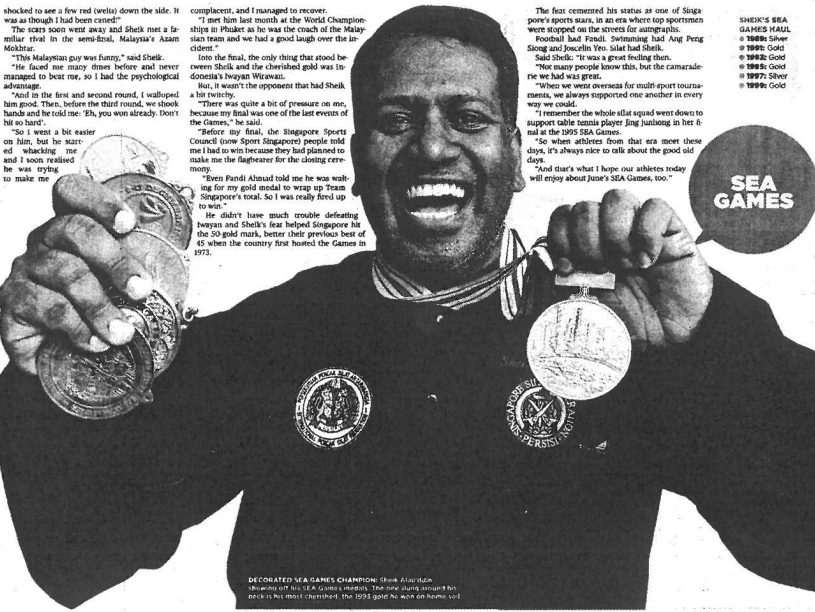
The 17-year-old shot to prominence last month after winning the Class F (50kg) title at the Pencak Silat World Championship in Phuket.

But there will be no Class F category at the SEA Games and Farhan's name was not among the more than 500 nominations on the initial list of athletes released by the Singapore National Olympic Council (SNOC) on Jan 26.

Sheik had hoped this writing in to higher authorities could result in a last-minute inclusion of the weight class.

But he said: "He's out already. I wrote a letter to SNOC president and Manpower Minister Tan Chuan-Jin and got the reply already. There's no way I'm planning on making him (Farhan) one of our assistant coaches for the Games so, hopefully, he will still feel part of the team."

"Hopefully, that'll be approved."



DECORATED SEA GAMES CHAMPION: Sheik Alau'ddin (above) is the SEA Games hero of the 1993 Games, and he took it his most cherished, the 1993 gold he won on home soil.