

Asian Games 2018: Jakarta & Palembang, Aug 18-Sept 2

# SILAT DUO HIT OUT AT JUDGING

## Nurzuhairah & Ferdous clinch historic silvers but feel that calls favoured the host nation

Sazali Abdul Aziz

They had just made history as Singapore's first two athletes to win silver medals in pencak silat at the Asian Games.

But Nurzuhairah Yazid and Sheikh Ferdous Sheikh Alau'ddin were still fuming when they spoke to The Straits Times over the phone hours after their respective milestones.

The pair shared a common gripe: what they felt was biased judging.

Nurzuhairah, 20, earned the Republic's first silver medal in silat at the Asian Games, after placing second in the women's tunggal (singles) artistic category yesterday morning at the Padepokan Pencak Silat TMII venue in Jakarta.

She scored 445 points for her routine, just one point ahead of bronze

medallist Cherry May Regaldo of the Philippines, and a whopping 22 behind gold medallist Puspa Arum-sari of Indonesia, who scored 467.

Hours later, 22-year-old Ferdous also settled for the silver after he was beaten 5-0 by another Indonesian athlete, Aji Bangkit Pamungkas, in his Class I (85-90kg) final.

Still sore over his defeat, Ferdous told ST: "This is the first time I have made a final in a major Games, so it's something to feel good about, I guess. But I was expecting to win gold, and expecting fair judging, at the very least."

He pointed to two incidents during his match with Aji, which he felt were wrong calls that favoured the home athlete.

The first was a takedown he executed on the Indonesian, which

was deemed invalid as he was adjudged to have illegally pulled his opponent down to the mat.

The second incident was a kick Aji connected with as Ferdous was attempting a low takedown. Strikes on an opponent lying on the ground are not allowed in silat, and only strikes to the trunk count for points.

Ferdous felt the kick did not satisfy these two rules, yet it was deemed valid.

Nurzuhairah also felt the scoring in her artistic category was skewed to favour Indonesia's Puspa.

"I was the first athlete to do my routine, and the Indonesian was right after me and, when we saw the gap between the points, we were all shocked," she said.

"Then the nervousness started to creep in about whether I had done enough to win a medal, but overall, I am satisfied with my performance because I know I did my best.

"I feel happy to get our first-ever silver medal, but I know we could



Left: Sheikh Ferdous Sheikh Alau'ddin (with blue sash) took the men's Class I (85-90kg) silver.

Above: Nurzuhairah Yazid was second in the women's tunggal (singles) artistic category. PHOTO: SNOG

have got better."

Singapore Silat Federation chief executive officer Sheikh Alau'ddin echoed the frustrations of his athletes.

"It's not only us. Many other countries are disappointed with the judging," claimed the two-time former world champion. "Some countries have complained that there seems to be favouritism shown to one country. It's very sad."

Malaysian star Al Jufferi Jamari, a three-time world champion who has also won four consecutive SEA Games gold medals, also complained of biased judging in his

Class E (65-70kg) final against Indonesia's Adi Putra Komang Harik.

He was so frustrated that he was not awarded points for valid strikes on his opponent that he staged a walkout in the dying moments of the match, reported Bernama yesterday. He received the silver.

So far, all eight gold medals that have been awarded in silat have gone to athletes from Indonesia.

A total of 16 golds are on offer in the sport this week, and the remaining medals will be contested tomorrow.

There will not be a clean sweep by the hosts, however, as of the five

remaining finals, only three feature Indonesian athletes.

This is the first time silat is a medal sport at the Asian Games.

Nurul Shafiqah Mohd Saiful clinched Singapore's first Asiad medal in the sport – a joint-bronze – in the women's Class B (50-55kg) category on Sunday.

She was followed by Siti Khadijah Mohd Shahrem and Sheikh Farhan Sheikh Alau'ddin, who both also won joint-bronzes in the women's Class C (55-60kg) and the men's Class J (90-95kg), respectively.

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