

SPORT

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AGE OF OPPOSING IN-FORM STRIKERS
HARRY KANE AND MAURO ICARDI C9E-SPORTS LEVELS
UP WITH NEW NSA

Association will raise its profile and improve competitive and career options for local gamers

David Lee

Singapore's electronic gamers have been creating ripples in the e-sports scene in recent months. Now, they stand a chance to make an impression on the wider community following the formation of the Singapore ESports Association.

The group, led by pro tem president Ng Chong Geng, was supported by Sport Singapore to be a national sports association (NSA) in July, and approved by the Registry of Societies earlier this month.

The move will allow local gamers to stand a chance to represent Singapore at major Games, such as next year's SEA Games.

Ng, 34, told The Straits Times:

"Our NSA hopes to promote and develop e-sports in Singapore and create an environment where playing and also working in the ecosystem around this become viable career options."

A SportSG spokesman added: "SportSG recognises that e-sports has been growing in popularity with our youth. There are positive attributes, such as teamwork and resilience, they can learn from competitive endeavour."

"We will look into how we can better support their passions while promoting responsible and healthy gameplay habits."

While Ng observed that the e-sports scene in Singapore still lags behind Thailand, Vietnam and the Philippines, it is starting to gather pace and gain recognition here.

Earlier this month, a Singapore-based team won the EA Champions Cup Winter 2018 in Busan, South Korea. Team Flash, including Singaporeans Fardeen Hussain, 21, and Amraan Gani, 24, beat Vietnam 3-1

in the final and won US\$100,000 (S\$137,000) for back-to-back victories in the Fifa Online Asian-level tournament.

Hyperplay, an inaugural integrated e-sports tournament and music festival, was also held at the Singapore Sports Hub in August for 10 Asean countries as part of the YouthX celebrations by the National Youth Council. In June, Singapore's first diploma in e-sports and game design was launched by the Informatics Academy.

After a two-day SEA Games Federation Council meeting in Manila last Saturday, e-sports was among 56 sports confirmed for next year's SEA Games in the Philippines.

Amraan said: "The prospect of representing Singapore is an exciting one. It is something I might have dreamt (about) for real-life football but not as a gamer. But, if it happens, it would be an honour."

Singapore National Olympic Council (SNOC) secretary-general Chris Chan clarified that e-sports,



ju-jitsu, kurash, skateboarding and surfing still have to submit their application forms, complete with endorsement either from their international federations or Asian bodies by Dec 7 to be approved as 2019 SEA Games sports.

However, he noted that the formation of the NSA is a positive move towards Team Singapore's e-sports debut at a major Games.

Chan said: "At the moment, e-sports teams compete on their own, or are at most led by a management team."

"With an NSA, they will ensure fair and transparent selection, and

there will be regulations and codes governing athletes, be it anti-doping or no-betting rules etc."

Ng added: "We are hopeful that e-sports will feature as a medal sport in the SEA Games, and we welcome the chance for new infrastructure to help stabilise e-sports in the region and allow wider audiences to appreciate the sport."

"Our NSA will be working on a selection criteria proposal for the SNOC, as well as deciding on the process to appoint the best possible national coach."

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Teams from China and Korea competing in the League of Legends game during the e-sports demonstration event at the Asian Games in Jakarta in August. E-sports has been included for next year's SEA Games.

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