

THIRTEEN-MAN BOXING TEAM TO BE SINGAPORE'S BIGGEST SO FAR

MORE ATHLETES EARN NOD FOR SEA GAMES

SNOC gives green light to 44 additional athletes from 13 sports

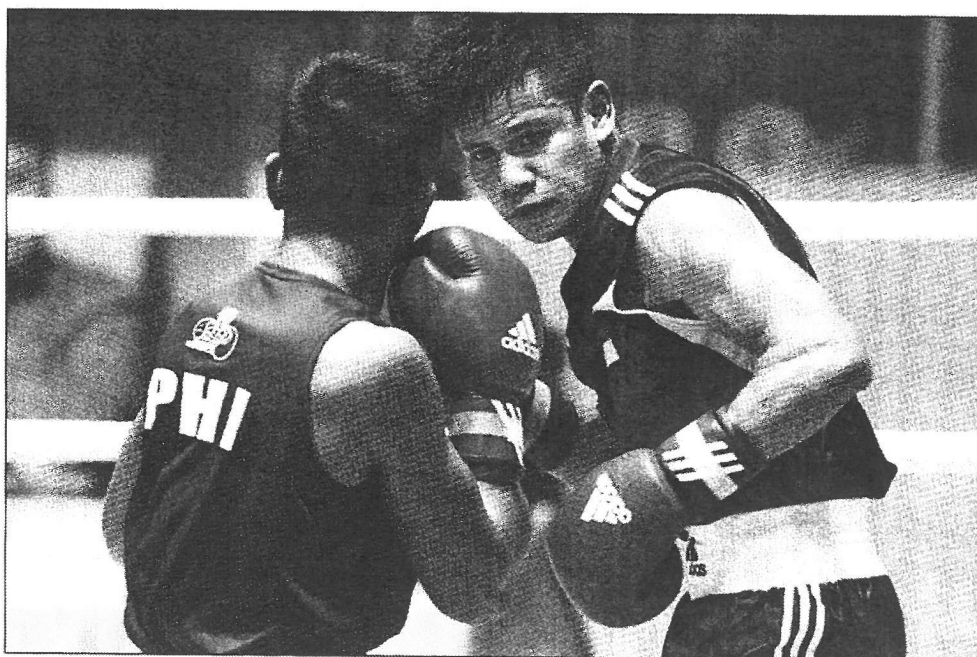
SINGAPORE— Hosts Singapore are expected to field their largest-ever contingent at the SEA Games, with 985 athletes on the initial shortlist for the biennial event to be held here from June 5 to 16.

An additional 44 athletes from 13 sports (swimming, boxing, silat, petanque, volleyball, archery, badminton, rugby, gymnastics, wushu, athletics, hockey, and floorball) were given the green light by the Singapore National Olympic Council (SNOC) Games Appeals Committee yesterday, adding to the 941 from the first selection meeting in January.

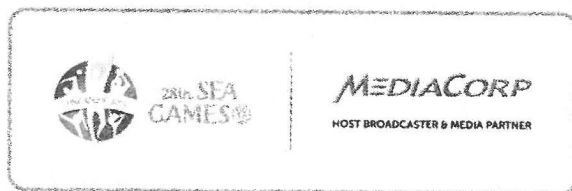
Boxing will also feature its biggest-ever squad of 13 for the SEA Games this year in its quest to win Singapore's first boxing gold medal since 1985, after seven athletes earned the nod from the SNOC yesterday.

With each country allowed to field only 10 boxers for the 11 medal events, the Singapore Amateur Boxing Association (SABA) will make a final selection of six men and four women for the 10 events — Singapore are not contesting the men's light flyweight (46kg to 49kg) category — by April 15.

The sport has been on the comeback trail since the 2010 Youth Olympic Games, when the National Sports Association (NSA) was re-started after it was de-affiliated from the SNOC in 2001 due to a lack of long-term planning and dwindling popularity.



Singapore's Ridhwan Ahmad (right) could be participating in his fourth SEA Games in June. TODAY FILE PHOTO



Since then, Singapore's boxers have won four bronze medals at the SEA Games in 2009, 2011 and 2013.

Emulating Mohd Mukhlis' victory in the 67kg category at the 1985 Bangkok Games is the target, and SABA president Kadir is confident they have a good squad in the ring.

"I have full confidence in this current batch and they are working hard and everyone has a good chance," said the former national boxer.

"Ridhwan Ahmad (56kg) has the most experience as this is his fourth

* KADIR MAY JOIN SEA GAMES SQUAD COACHING STAFF

● Former Singapore national defender Kadir Yahaya could be heading back to the Football Association of Singapore, after sources revealed he is set join Singapore national under-23 head coach Aide Iskandar's coaching team.

TODAY understands that Kadir, 46, is expected to take up the role on a part-time basis. The national under-23 side is preparing for the SEA Games in June. The SEA Games football competition is an under-23 affair, and Singapore are aiming to win the gold medal for the first time.

The development comes a day after Kadir led St Joseph's Institution to its first football title in 30 years, beating Queensway Secondary School 1-0 to win the National Schools "B" Division Championships at SAFRA Tampines on Wednesday. Kadir could not be reached for comment. Aides also declined to comment on the matter, saying that it is still being processed and that nothing had been finalised.

Kadir had previously coached Singapore's national under-15 side for the 2010 Youth Olympic Games, where they claimed the bronze medal. He was also assistant to former national team-mate V Sundramoorthy with the LionsXII during the 2012 Malaysian Super League season.
SHANJAYAN MUNIAPPAN

SEA Games, and I have a feeling he will make the final as he has improved a lot. He is much stronger now and can take on anybody.

"The sport is coming up and we have juniors, youth and seniors coming up. We have potential for the future, and we want to work slowly to getting two or three athletes to the Asian Games."

NSAs have to narrow down the specific athletes for the events and submit a shortlist by April 15, with the final list of representatives for the SEA Games to be confirmed by the end of this month. **LOWLIN FHOONG**