

S'PORE MAY HOST SILAT WORLD C'SHIPS

Persisi bids to take over from Indonesia but requires funding of at least \$700,000 for event

Sazali Abdul Aziz

The World Pencak Silat Championships could be coming to Singapore at the end of the year.

This year's edition of the biennial tournament was originally scheduled to be hosted by Indonesia in Jakarta in December.

However, the Indonesian Pencak Silat Association (IPSI) has decided to forgo its hosting rights.

The Straits Times understands this is because IPSI president Prabowo Subianto is gearing up to contest Indonesia's presidential election in April next year.

Singapore Silat Federation (Persisi) chief executive officer Sheik Alau'ddin confirmed Singapore's bid to replace Indonesia as host of the World Championships.

"I've put in all the necessary paperwork, now we are waiting for (international silat body) Persilat to give us the endorsement to host the competition," he told The Straits Times in a phone interview from Uzbekistan where he is on a working trip.

"In the meantime, I am talking to several parties to seek support and funding so that we will be able to carry out the event."

Sheik said Persisi would need a "minimum of \$700,000" to host the competition, tentatively scheduled for Dec 10-17 if Singapore is awarded the hosting rights.

The 50-year-old, a two-time former world champion of the traditional Malay martial art, added that he is hoping to secure the OCBC

Arena halls at the Singapore Sports Hub as the venue.

Singapore hosted the World Championships twice, in 1988 and 2004. The Republic's best performance came in 2004, when its athletes claimed four golds, four silvers and nine bronze medals.

Indonesia has already hosted the event five times, while Malaysia and Thailand have done so three times each. The other two editions were held in Austria (1986) and the Netherlands (1990).

Saudi Arabia is slated to host the 2020 tournament in Riyadh.

Over 40 nations from four continents are expected to participate this year, a sign of the growth of the event, which had only seven participating nations in its inaugu-

ral edition in 1982.

National silat exponent Shakir Juanda, also a two-time world champion, said Singapore's bid to host the competition will boost the sport locally.

"It will not only be a boost for us athletes competing, but also for the silat community as a whole," said the 29-year-old, who triumphed in 2012 and 2016.

"Hosting the World Championships will give an opportunity to show that silat is not just a sport for Malays.

"At the Worlds, you will see so many fighters from different countries, with their own fighting styles. Everything is more vibrant."



Shakir Juanda (left) in action during last year's SEA Games in Kuala Lumpur. In his opinion, Singapore's bid to host the World Championships this year will lift the profile of the sport considerably. PHOTO: SPORT SINGAPORE