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10-year ban for under-fire silat referee

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10-year ban for under-fire silat referee

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SILAT referee Jasni Salam, who came under heavy criticism for his controversial decisions at last November's South-east Asia Games, has been suspended for 10 years – believed to be the longest ban handed to a referee in Singapore sports.

The Singapore Silat Federation (Persisi) announced yesterday that the 52-year-old, who had been refereeing for more than 20 years, has been stripped of his do-

years, has been stripped of his domestic licence and will not be allowed to enter any arena where silat activities are held for the length of the ban.

Persisi will also recommend to the International Pencak Silat Federation in Jakarta to revoke Mr Jasni's international credentials to prevent him from refereeing at overseas meets.

"It is justified," said Persisi secretary-general Isiah Majid. According to her, this is the first time the body is punishing an official since being formed in 1976. "We want to tell the silat community that just because you are a volunteer, you cannot (assume you can) take your responsibilities lightly."

Mr Jasni, who works as a hotel housekeeper, would only say yesterday that he had been informed of his ban and did not want to comment so as to not "blow the matter up".

He came under intense scrutiny after officiating the men's Class A 45-50kg final at the Jakarta Games. Indonesian Dian Kristanto won the gold but not before displaying now-infamous antics during the final round bout, which included running away from his Thai opponent Anothai Choopeng, biting him on the shoulder and then using Mr Jasni as a shield to hide behind.

Times yesterday. "But 10 years is too long; maybe three to five years would have been enough. Still, referees must remember always to do right. It's an honour to referee, so they must do right."

Former Singapore silat exponent Abdul Talib also agreed that the ban was excessive. He said:

Videos of the final that were uploaded onto YouTube garnered more than 400,000 views and led to outrage from the silat community. Persisi chief executive and former world champion Sheik Alauddin went as far as to call the official a "moron".

Still, the president of the Pencak Silat Association of Thailand, General Akawut Potipaet, believes the 10-year ban on Mr Jasni may have been harsh even though he believes his fighter was denied the gold unfairly.

"It is right to punish him," Gen Akawut told The Straits

“When I saw the YouTube video, I was shocked. But in my experience, when you are in an arena overseas, the pressure gets to you.

“To put the blame solely on him is not fair. I can say that through the years he has been a good referee.”

In an interview with The New Paper last year, Mr Jasni admitted he had performed badly but denied accusations he had deliberately favoured the host, Indonesia. “Before anyone accuses me of being corrupt, please show me the evidence,” he said then.

Persisi had arranged for a disciplinary inquiry on Jan 27, which Mr Jasni, who lives in an HDB flat in Woodlands with his wife, four sons and one adopted daughter, failed to turn up for.

He also did not attend the re-scheduled Feb 7 hearing. Still, the five-man disciplinary committee convened in his absence using evidence based on previous interviews with Mr Jasni.

He was found guilty of bringing the Singapore federation into “disrepute” by his poor performance in the November match. Another charge of telling the media he had done nothing wrong without checking with the federation first was dismissed.

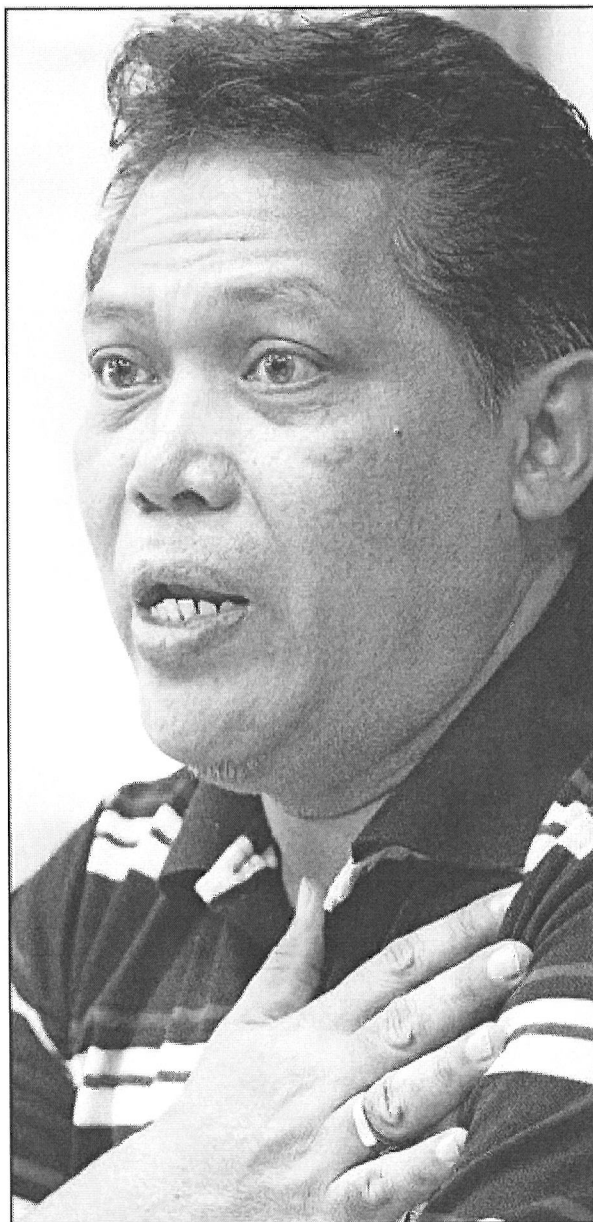
He told The Straits Times yesterday that he was unavailable to attend the inquiries as he had to work the overnight shifts.



Indonesian Dian Kristanto won the gold despite using referee Jasni Salam as a shield at last year's Sea Games.

PHOTO: MONTAGE

PHOTO: YOUTUBE



Mr Jasni Salam did not comment on his ban so as to not “blow the matter up”. PHOTO: NEW PAPER . PHOTO: NEW PAPER