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BEN NADARAJAN SILAT *By*

THE Singapore silat team has a shot at winning five titles at the inaugural Asia Pacific Pencak Silat Championships, which end today.

Four members of the men's team and one from the women's team won their semi-final bouts yesterday at the Silat Centre of Excellence at Bedok.

There are eight weight divisions for men and three for women in this tournament.

Yusoff Shah Kamarudin, competing in the 70-75kg division, was the Republic's most impressive exponent, eliminating Nizam Idris from Brunei with a technical knock-out.

The 19-year-old, who received a bye in Sunday's quarter-finals, went on the offensive from the start and scored

two falls over his opponent within a minute.

For the first, he grabbed Nizam's leg and threw him onto the mat with a good deal of force.

Yusoff then scored his second fall while recovering quickly from a kick. He grabbed his rival's leg and swept his other foot from under him.

The two hard falls made Nizam's coach throw in the towel.

Yusoff will face Vietnam's Dinh Cong Son in the final.

Singapore's South-east Asia Games gold medallist Zulfakar Ramli won his 55-60kg division bout against Thailand's Prasit Walum.

Criticised by some foreign coaches on Sunday for relying too much on his fists to beat Malaysian Emy Fadly Abdul

Azis, Zulfakar showed yesterday that he could mix his punches with fine leg sweeps and throws.

However, the match turned ugly in the second round when he hit his opponent's face accidentally, leaving him with a bleeding upper lip.

It looked like Prasit had ducked too low when Zulfakar threw a punch at his body. But the enraged Thai did not see it that way and turned aggressive. He even threw the Singaporean to the mat after the referee had called for a break.

However, the tension made for a much better fight, which had the 100-strong crowd on its feet.

The 20-year-old Zulfakar, a silver medallist at the 2000 World Championships, was composed enough to hold off the challenge and win 5-0. Yet, he was left nursing a bruised right ankle and left calf and a cut on his upper lip.

But national head coach Sheik Alauddin said Zulfakar will be ready to take on Vietnam's Nguyen Duy Viet today.

Zulfakar's older brother, Noor Rafili Ramli, also defeated a Thai, Abdullah Mahlee, 4-1 to reach the final while Imran Abdul Rahman beat Malaysia's Azhar Ahmad 4-1.

Saiedah Said, Singapore's sole woman finalist, beat Malaysia's Jurida Hussein 5-0 in her 45-50kg division semi-final.

All 10 of Vietnam's exponents have made it to the finals of their respective divisions. Only the men's 45-50kg final will not feature a Vietnamese — it is between Malaysia and Thailand.



BERITA HARIAN

Flying kicks helped Imran Abdul Rahman to a 4-1 win over Malaysia's Azhar Ahmad (left) yesterday.