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SHAKIR GIVES SILAT TIMELY BOOST

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SHAKIR GIVES SILAT TIMELY BOOST

S'pore's first world title since 2007
can inspire a new generation: Sheik

THE STRAITS TIMES STAR OF THE MONTH

Presented by **100PLUS**

By  CHAN U-GENE  ugenec@sph.com.sg

A PAIR of luminous blue Von Zipper sunglasses, once the prized possession of national silat exponent Shakir Juanda, now sits on the dashboard of Sheik Alau'ddin's car.

It is a reminder of how far the world champion has come. At last month's World Pencak Silat Championships in Chiang Rai, Sheik felt Shakir needed more confidence in himself.

So, the Singapore Silat Federation chief executive boldly predicted to his doubting charge: "You will bring back the gold, nothing less than that. And when you do, you'll have to give me that pair of sunglasses."

Singapore's first world silat title since 2007 was duly delivered and the sunglasses, worth over \$200, changed ownership.

Five years ago, Singapore clinched golds through the men's artistic team, as well as Razif Moklas and Imran Abdul Rahman.

For his win in the "I" Class (85kg-90kg), Shakir also picked

up The Straits Times Star of the Month award for November. The award is an extension of ST's Athlete of the Year accolade, which was launched in 2008. Both are backed by F&N's 100Plus.

Sheik feels that Shakir's victory is timely for a nation starved of results on the world stage.

"For five years, we have been hungry for success. This brings us back on the world circuit. New champions will continue to be bred through Shakir's achievement," said Sheik, a two-time world champion.

The gold, which was contested by 10 competitors in Thailand, did not come easy. A resolute Shakir fought through bruised ankles, an aching right knee, and a sore jaw - suffered from an illegal punch - over the four-day competition.

He beat four opponents, all with 5-0 victories, before clinching the gold with a 3-2 comeback win over Vietnam's Le Si Kien.

His first opponent was Russia's Akim Terentev, a sturdy contender who stood at least a head taller.

Said the Singaporean: "He was

so strong and I knew I couldn't brawl with him."

Staying out of harm's way, Shakir exploited his opponent's poor technique with quick counters.

The final bout was a battle of will and stamina.

Le took the first two rounds but, in the third, Shakir sensed weakness. He explained: "I saw him putting his hands to his knees and I knew he was tired. I went full steam ahead and kept on attacking."

Launching wave after wave of body punches and frontal kicks, Shakir kept bringing his opponent down with powerful leg sweeps for the winning points.

When it was over, Shakir, a part-time degree student at the Asia Pacific School of Sports and Business, fell to his knees, put his head on the ground, cried, and said a silent prayer.

Later, he reminded himself to get a new pair of sunglasses. And this time, he will look through those lenses with a new-found confidence.

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TURNING POINT

I saw him putting his hands to his knees and I knew he was tired. I went full steam ahead.

– Shakir Juanda on his final opponent, Vietnam's Le Si Kien

FILLIP FOR THE SPORT

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– Singapore Silat Federation chief executive Sheik Alau'ddin

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(Above) National silat exponent Muhammad Shakir Juanda showing off the medal he won for being the world champion in the 85kg to 90kg category at the World Pencak Silat Championships in Thailand.

PHOTO: BERITA HARIAN



(Right) Shakir adding another trophy to his collection after receiving his Straits Times Star of the Month award from F&N general manager, corporate marketing, Jennifer See and ST sports editor Marc Lim.

PHOTO: MARK CHEONG FOR THE STRAITS TIMES

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