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ALVIN FOO » SILAT BY

EIGHT more months to November's South-east Asia Games, and Singapore silat is buzzing with activity.

On Tuesday, an eight-member elite squad left for a three-week stint in Europe, where they will compete in this weekend's Paris Open and next month's Belgian Open.

Tomorrow, 24 exponents will head to Tanjung Pinang for next week's Sijori Championships.

A team of 22 juniors and 18 seniors have just returned from last week's Malaysian National Championships in Kuala Lumpur with 13 golds, five silvers and six bronzes — and the best team trophy.

And 63 Singa Silat kids went on a seven-day training stint cum tour in Jakarta last week.

Said Singapore Silat Federation technical director Sheik Alauddin: "This is the first phase of preparation before our trials from June to August. We will finalise the Games squad by September."

At the 2003 Vietnam Games, Singapore won three golds, two silvers and 10 bronzes from the 21 golds at stake.

The sport ranked fourth on the Republic's medal tally after swimming (eight golds), table tennis (six golds) and athletics (four golds). Overall, Singapore won 30 golds, 33 silvers and 50 bronzes.

Sheik has set a conservative target of three golds from the 14 SEA Games events in Manila. But the record four-gold haul from last December's World Championships suggests there may be more.

All four medallists beat Vietnamese opponents, their closest rivals at the Games, in their respective finals.

Another reason to be upbeat is the likely return of former world champions Zulfakar Ramli and Abdul Kadir Ibrahim in May. Both have been out for a year with knee injuries.