

World champ gets the chop
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Silat federation drop Imran from SEA Games squad after he misses training sessions
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HE IS a reigning world champion and is touted as a gold medal prospect for Singapore in silat at next week's SEA Games.

But yesterday, silat star Muhammad Imran Abdul Rahman's dream of one final shot at glory was dashed when the two-time world champion was cut from the squad bound for Korat, Thailand.

The Singapore Silat Federation (SSF) management committee met on Sunday to decide Imran's fate and announced their decision yesterday.

"This drop is due to the breach of the SSF Athlete's Agreement 2007 and the decision is final," read the statement, which was issued to the athlete and was copied to the Singapore National Olympic Council and Singapore Sports Council.

The 24-year-old's troubles began after he won the championship in the men's tanding

receive any reprimands.

"They could have given me a stern warning instead of dropping me from the squad," said Imran.

"I don't think the decision is fair as I was not represented at Sunday's meeting and they decided without hearing my side of the story.

"I'm at the peak of my career and I've won numerous medals for the country... I'm really sad that my contributions to the sport over the years were not taken into consideration."

Imran's career highs include the two world titles he won in 2004 and this October.

At the Manila SEA Games two years ago, he clinched Singapore's only silat gold medal when he defeated Indonesia's Andy Zulkarnian 5-0 in the men's tanding class H.

At the recent world championships, he defended his gold

class H (80-85kg) at the 2007 World Pencak Silat Championships in Pahang on Oct 26. Imran claimed he had informed one of the coaches that he needed to rest after the tournament, but the SSF said they didn't

sanction his break and warned him for missing training sessions.

Imran was reprimanded by the coaches - three times in August, September and November, respectively," said SSF president Abdullah Shafie Sidik.

"We decided to drop Imran because his attendance at training was less than 50 per cent.

"In silat, our emphasis is on discipline and athletes must be punctual and attend training sessions. The committee unanimously agreed that action had to be taken. He can still appeal our decision within the next 48 hours.

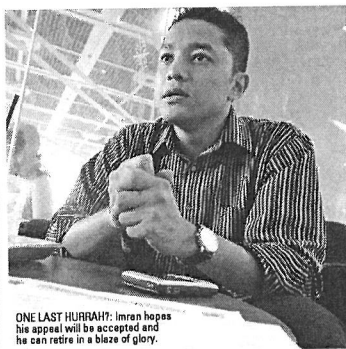
Speaking to TODAY yesterday, Imran expressed his disappointment with the decision and maintained that he did not

medal with a convincing 5-0 win over Vietnamese Le Sy Kien.

Imran's chances of defending his SEA Games gold will depend on his appeal letter, which he intends to submit to SSF's high performance manager, Mohd Asadullah Karimullah today. An SSF appeals' committee would be set up to deal with the matter.

While his fate hangs in the balance, Imran's retirement plan - after 13 years in the sport he intends to quit competing internationally after the SEA Games - remains on track as he intends to set up a silat academy with former world champion Abdul Kadir Ibrahim.

"I'm setting up my own academy to train children in silat and I hope to nurture more champions for Singapore in the future," he said.



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