

# Indonesia taking a backseat at Asiad

It has been a long time since Indonesia first took part in the Asian Games, but as many East Asian countries are steadily climbing up the medal tower, Indonesia is heading in the opposite direction — slowly slumping to the bottom.

Indonesian Youth and Sports Minister Andi Mallarangeng denied Indonesian sports are in decline, but said that top results are difficult to achieve because the Asian Games is a world-class competition.

“I think our sports are on the rise. If we look at the Southeast Asian Games, we used to be in fourth place but now we are in third, and hopefully we will be No 1 next year,” Andi said.

“This means that momentum is going our way,” he said.

Despite the statement, statistics show Indonesia has indeed been left behind.

It might be too much to compare Indonesia with other East Asian countries, such as heavyweights like China, Japan or Korea.

But even among Southeast Asian countries, including Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore, the country with the fourth largest population in the world is sitting in the backseat.

Before the Guangzhou Games, the head of the Indonesian Sports Council, Rita Subowo, said Indonesia, which sent 140

athletes to China, aimed for victory in at least seven events. But after eight days, Indonesia had only collected three gold medals, seven silver and 10 bronze.

Archrival Thailand is ahead with four gold medals, six silver and 17 bronze, and neighboring Malaysia follows right behind with three golds, four silver and five bronze.

All of the gold medals come from dragon boat racing, a non-Olympic sport that might not even appear at the next Asian Games in Incheon, Korea.

The athletes might be very happy winning the gold for their country, but more hardwork is required from the national sports authority — to try and get dragon boat racing into the Olympics.

Although admitting Indonesia has been left behind by many East Asian and Southeast Asian countries, Andi said Indonesia is not alone at the back.

The minister has his own opinion, arguing Indonesia had been mostly absent from the Asian Games podium because of the stiff competition.

“We were a contender at the Southeast Asian Games, but when the level is this high at the Asian Games, our athletes are mostly at the back of the pack,” he said.

— THE JAKARTA POST

## Glittering day for Thailand

Thailand celebrated its most glittering day so far at the 16th Asian Games on Saturday, winning six gold medals — in sailing, sepak takraw and taekwondo.

Having won only one title in the first seven days, Thailand's gold medal tally is now seven with six days to go. The kingdom is targeting 16 gold medals.

The Thai winners on Saturday included the sailing pair of Dumrongsak Vongtim and Kitsada Vongtim in the men's Hobie 16.

It was a special birthday gift for Kitsada, who turned 28 on Saturday.

“It is a special occasion to win gold, but to win gold on your birthday is more special. I can hardly believe it,” Kitsada said.

“It is also a gift for my one-month-old son,” he said.

In sepak takraw, the Thai men had few problems in their 2-0 win over archrivals Malaysia in the final to clinch their fourth consecutive gold. Thailand coach Kamol Tankimhong said: “Malaysia was a good team but we had natural instinct.”

In taekwondo, Chutchawal defeated Korea's Kim Seong-ho 8-6 in the men's 54kg final.

Chutchawal is a volunteer at the Ruamkatanyu Charity Rescue Foundation. He thanked his friends at the foundation for setting up a club to cheer him.

— BANGKOK POST



ZHANG CHENGLIANG / CHINA DAILY

## Dragon boats have broad appeal

While many professional athletes struggle to find their way into the limelight at international multi-event sporting competitions, such as the Guangzhou Asian Games, teams of fantastic amateur boat racers are now unable to avoid publicity. Civil servants, police officers, soldiers, nurses, firemen, fishermen, housewives, teachers and students have all joined the

colorful Asian Games dragon boat race competition, which made its Asiad debut last Tuesday.

Indonesian policeman Silo said he has had no difficulties joining the national team because his superiors were supportive and granted him training leave.

“If there is no training camp, I am a police officer as usual, and there is no special treatment for me,” said the 25-year-old first brigadier officer who works as a training instructor in Central Kalimantan. “But I'm very grateful because my

superiors support me, and they will have no objection if there is a call for me from the National Sports Council.”

For Silo, dragon boat racing has the same principles as police work. “It's like a police brigade, one for all and all for one,” he said.

The Indonesian men's team consists of policemen, a marine, several civil servants and university students. Sixteen of the 22-strong squad are new, while the rest are members of the previous team that competed at several

Southeast Asian Games and the Bali Asian Beach Games.

Silo's teammate, civil servant Didin Rusdiana, said he discovered dragon boat racing by accident when university students from Jakarta came to train in his hometown, near Bandung, a few years back.

He hopes his dragon boat racing efforts will help the new Asian Games sport gain global exposure as it chases a berth in the Olympics.

— THE JAKARTA POST

## Taekwondo squad goes poof!

Nepal will return home empty handed from Guangzhou in taekwondo, its most successful sport internationally, after its last two players failed to improve their performance on the final day of the event on Saturday.

Nepal's fall from grace occurred after Kumar Manandhar and Sujan Pujari failed to advance to the quarterfinals.

Until now, Nepal had never missed a medal at the Asian Games, amassing a total of 13 bronze and one silver in taekwondo.

Experienced Manandhar had a forgettable bout against Kim Seong-ho of Korea in the men's -54kg class. The sad part was that Manandhar did not earn a single point in the entire match but lost one due to a warning.

Relatively young Pujari fared slightly better. He conceded the men's -58kg match against Bilguun Khosbayar of Mongolia 9-8.

— THE KATHMANDU POST