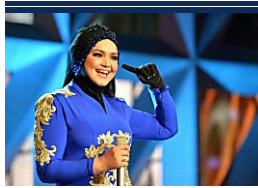


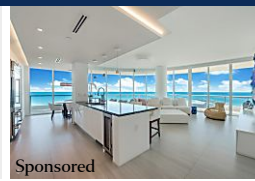
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Athletics: New look 4x100m men's relay team eye SEA Games spot



National sprinter Calvin Kang (right) receiving the baton from relay team-mate Timothee Yap during a training session. ST PHOTO: LIM YAOHUI

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Kang and new relay team-mates are hoping to qualify for SEA Games at S'pore Open

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New faces will feature for Singapore's men's 4x100m relay team at this year's SEA Games, should they meet the qualifying mark of 39.32 seconds by May 31, when the qualifying window ends.

National sprinter Calvin Kang is the only survivor from the 2015 Games squad, following the retirements of Gary Yeo, Lee Cheng Wei and Amirudin Jamal. They won silver on home soil in a national record of 39.24sec.

The current relay runners, apart from Kang, include Khairyll Amri, S Shahmee Ruzain, Hariz Darajit, 18, Ariff Januri, 22, and 22-year-old Timothee Yap, who competed in the 100m at the Rio de Janeiro Olympics on a wildcard.

Four of them will compete together as a relay quartet for the first time at this month's Singapore Open Track & Field Championships at the Singapore Sports Hub.

The relay line-up for the April 27-28 competition has yet to be confirmed but Kang said: "What's most important now is the commitment of the team, and whether each person wants to realise their dream together as one team."

The 26-year-old was part of the silver medal-winning 4x100m relay teams at the last three biennial Games and believes the squad members have to try different positions.

"I think for relays the key is to race more and experience different combinations and atmospheres," added the 2008 Olympian. "Usually every track has different markings; in terms of where you're standing, what you're looking at and the pivot point - everything is different."

Khairyll, whose 100m personal best of 10.76sec was set at the 2015 Singapore Open, said it was crucial to develop chemistry as coordination is everything in relays.

"That's what we want to try to achieve - to get used to every sprinter (running in different positions) and develop that familiarity," said the 24-year-old. "We will never know which combination is best until we try them out."

He added: "If we can get the baton exchanges quickly out of the zone, the relay timing will be much quicker. Our main focus now is to try and hit sub-40sec first."

Most of the team have trained together since last year, albeit in truncated periods, except newcomer Shahmee, who joined in January.

The 18-year-old Catholic Junior College student clocked a personal best 10.93sec at last year's Asean Schools Games in Chiang Mai, where he finished fourth.

He said: "This is my A Level year, but it will be a good challenge for me and making the final squad (will make for) a good stepping stone. It's going to motivate me to want to go further in track."

Singapore Athletics' vice-president (training and selection) Govindasamy Balasekaran agreed that expectations of the relay team for the Aug 19-31 SEA Games in Kuala Lumpur have to be tempered.

"What we want is for them to do their best, and that there are no flaws in passing," he said. "From there we will start to work for future meets, and hopefully (this squad) stays intact."

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