

South-east Asia's pursuit of Olympic glory

From the time Filipino swimmer Teofilo Yldefonso won a bronze medal in swimming at the 1928 Olympics, South-east Asian athletes have gone on to show that the Olympics is not too big a stage for the region's best to shine. Athletes from Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Vietnam have won a total of 72 Olympic medals. But only Thailand and Indonesia have struck gold. Can another nation join them in Rio?

THAILAND



Best events by medals won



Reward for gold

- 10 million baht (\$387,000).
- There is an ongoing review to increase this by 20 per cent.



Boxer Somluck Kamsing won the kingdom's first Olympic gold in Atlanta 1996. Since then, the sport has contributed three more Olympic titles, while Thailand's weightlifters have also added three golds. It was also boxing which won Thailand's first medal in 1976 – a bronze by Payao Poontrarat.

INDONESIA



Best events by medals won



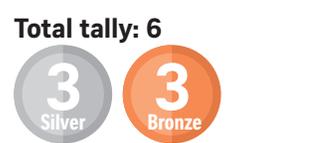
Reward for gold

- Five billion Indonesian rupiah (\$517,000)
- A lifetime annual pension of at least 10 million rupiah (\$1,038).



Indonesia won its first gold medals in Barcelona 1992 when Susi Susanti and Alan Budikusuma, who would later marry each other, took the women's and men's singles titles. The five medals won in 1992, when the sport made its Olympic debut, set the tone for Indonesia's Olympic future. Its 18 medals in badminton is second only to China's 38.

MALAYSIA



Best events by medals won



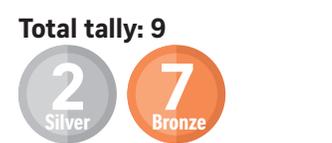
Reward for gold

- RM1 million (\$333,000)
- A lifetime monthly pension of RM5,000,



Like Indonesia, Malaysia has relied on badminton at the Olympics. But unlike its neighbours, it has yet to win the top prize. Sidek brothers Razif and Jalani won Malaysia's first Olympic medal in 1992. Hopes for a gold in Rio will again rest on Lee Chong Wei, a two-time Olympic silver medalist and current world No. 1.

PHILIPPINES



Best events by medals won



Reward for gold

- 10 million pesos (\$288,000)



The Philippines was the first South-east Asian country to win an Olympic medal when swimmer Teofilo Yldefonso (above) took home a bronze in the men's 200m breaststroke in Amsterdam 1928. But while swimming was the sport in which the nation first made a splash, it is boxing which has won five of its nine medals including Anthony Villanueva's Tokyo 1964 featherweight silver.

SINGAPORE



Best events by medals won



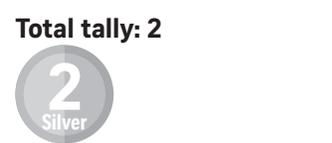
Reward for gold

- \$1 million



Singapore's first Olympic medal came in Rome 1960 when weightlifter Tan Howe Liang won the silver in the lightweight event. But it would have to wait 48 years before its second, also a silver, this time from the women's table tennis team in 2008. The Republic did not have to endure another long wait for more medals as table tennis added two more bronzes in London 2012, including Feng Tianwei's feat in the women's singles.

VIETNAM



Best events by medals won



Reward for gold

- No official reward scheme. Private sponsors have pledged prizes ranging from luxury watches to cash of close to US\$100,000 (\$134,000).



Vietnam's first medal came from taekwondo exponent Tran Hieu Ngan, a silver in the women's 57kg class in Sydney 2000. Eight years later in Beijing, weightlifter Hoang Anh Tuan (above) was second in the men's 56kg.

NOTE: The other South-east Asian countries Brunei, Cambodia, East Timor, Laos and Myanmar have yet to win a medal.

PHOTOS: THE NATION, NP FILE, THE STAR PUBLICATION, ST FILE, AFP SUNDAY TIMES GRAPHICS