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For Immediate Release

Asian Junior and Cadet Fencing Championships 2017
February 24 – March 5
Korat, Thailand

Day 6 – Esther Lai wins Singapore’s first-ever Junior (Under 20) gold medal in Women’s Epee

KORAT – Team Singapore ended five days of frustration in Korat – where our fencers suffered defeats in semi-finals across six different events – in the grandest fashion when Esther Lai broke through with a Gold Medal in the Junior (Under-20) Women’s Epee individual event.

The 16-year-old JC1 student from Raffles Institution produced a fine performance against defending champion Miho Yoshimura, winning 15-4 in a one-sided final.

Having started this tournament 76th in the World Junior Rankings, victory over 16th-ranked Yoshimura, Japan’s top junior, would likely propel Esther into the World Top 20 when the next rankings are released.

Having secured her path to the Direct Elimination stage with three victories and equal number of defeats in the Poules, Esther admitted winning the gold medal comes as a bit of a surprise. “I was simply hoping to get the best result and do better than last year’s result of reaching the Round of 16,” she said.

Esther came into the Junior competition having won Bronze in the Cadet (Under-17) Epee individual event last Friday and a similar result for the Team event two days ago. In the knockout stage, she brushed aside Thailand’s Jantraporn Chuaythong 15-8 in R64, and Hong Kong’s Yang Chi Ya 15-10 in R32.

The R16 match against Kazakhstan’s Dayana Jakupova saw Esther mounting a late fightback to overturn a 9-11 deficit to win 15-14, with the final point coming from a double-touch. Against Japan’s Haruna Baba, who had beaten her team-mate Kiria Tikanah Abdul Rahman in the previous round, Esther fought back from an early 3-6, 6-9, and 7-11 deficits to tie the score and 12-12, before powering through for a rapid fire 15-13 win. Securing victory in just the first three-minute period certainly helped Esther, who was fencing with a minor back strain picked up last week.

The semi-final against Vietnam’s Nguyen Thi Luyen again saw Esther maintaining greater composure in the latter stages, taking the lead at 7-6 and never relinquishing the advantage for an eventual 15-12 victory.

The final saw Esther taking on an opponent nearly three years older than her, although she had beaten Yoshimura in their only previous meeting, a 5-4 poule result in the World Junior and Cadet Championships in Bourges, France, last March.

Fencing with plenty of verve and freedom, Esther shot to a 7-1 lead, scoring freely on attack and defence. It was soon 13-3, before a shell-shocked Yoshimura was defeated 15-4.

Said Esther: "I was happy to get to the final and to be able to fence on the podium piste, and I wanted to make the most of the rare opportunity to fence against an opponent of Yoshimura's calibre, as she is the defending champion and world ranked 16th.

"I was very nervous before the final but managed to turn that into something positive as I was fencing under less pressure and could go out there and enjoy myself."

"The final scoreline was a surprise, but coach Fu Hao had a game plan for me which I stuck to and executed well. I'm very thankful to coach for his guidance in the past four years, and especially for believing in me."

Lauding the result, Mr Yau Wee Sian, Vice President of Fencing Singapore said: "This historic Gold Medal at this annual Asian Junior (U20) Fencing Championships is a timely affirmation and milestone for both Esther and our Singapore Fencing Community."

"Today's result against the best in Asia demonstrates that we are on the right track towards a Singapore Fencing Vision 2024, which is only possible if our talented youths continue their sporting journey, crossing from their Cadet (U17) years to the Junior (U20) years, and on to the Senior years, most importantly continuing to reach for larger major milestones at both the Asian and World level."

"We can only succeed as a community with the perseverance and never-say-die attitude of these youths, not forgetting the unwavering support from their family, coaches and the many people guiding & encouraging them along."

Team Singapore's other results were:

Women's Epee individual: (R32) Kiria Tikanah Abdul Rahman; (R64) Rebecca Ong; (Poule) Grace Mun.

Men's Sabre individual: (R32), Fong Zheng Jie, Ron Loh, Lam Jing Siang; (R64) Nicholas Loo. Competition continues tomorrow (Thursday 2 Mar) with individual Men's Foil and Women's Sabre events.

The AJCFC 2017 features more than 700 fencers from 27 Asian countries in both juniors and cadets events.

At the last edition of the AJCFC in Bahrain/Saudi Arabia, Singapore's Junior fencers returned with 1 silver and 4 bronzes, while the Cadets brought home 3 gold, 2 silver and 4 bronze medals for one of Singapore's best historical showing.



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Fencing Singapore (formerly known as "Amateur Fencing Association of Singapore") was established in 1955 and is the national governing body for the sport of fencing. Currently, there are 5000 fencers in the fencing community. By actively participating in international competitions, organising international events and promoting the sport to more youths, Fencing Singapore aims to raise the profile of the sport and to achieve medals at the highest levels of global competition. More information about the sport can be found at <http://fencingsingapore.org.sg>