

# MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

Rookie Lim, Gai Bin and Poh help Republic to achieve four-gold target



SEA GAMES 2009, LAOS

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**VIENTIANE:** Only in a sport like shooting does the television screen inside the venue attract more attention from the crowd than the live action just metres in front of them.

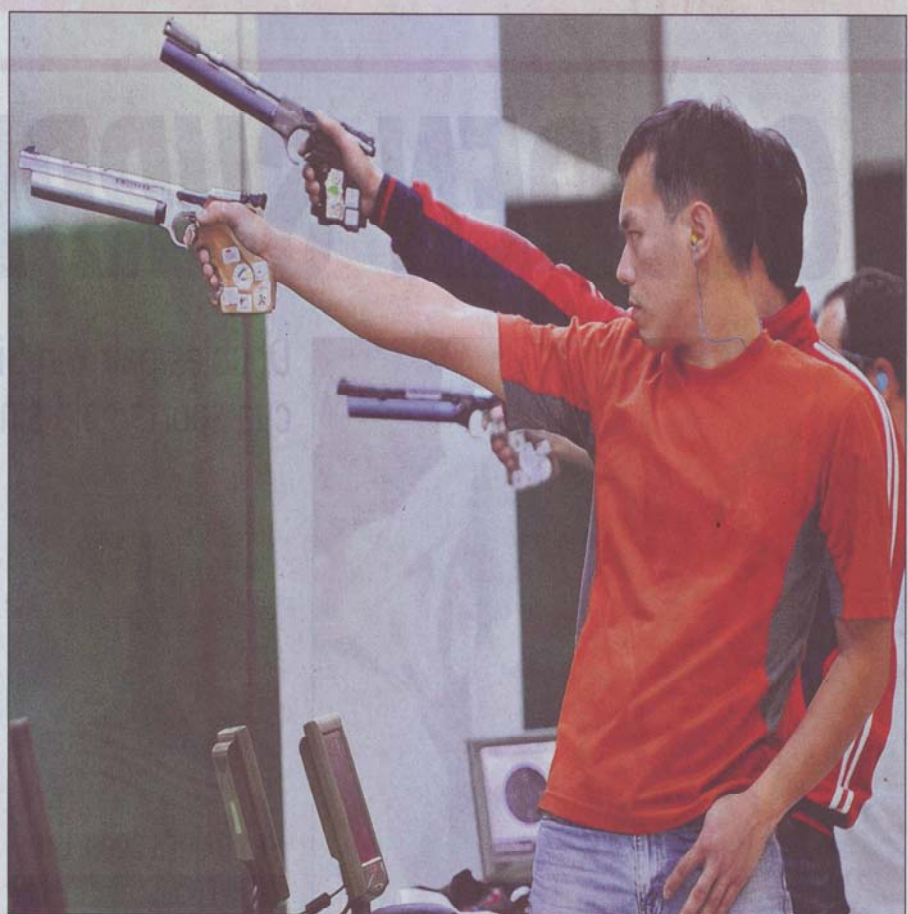
While Singapore trio Nigel Lim, Poh Lip Meng and Gai Bin competed in the men's 10m air pistol event at the National Sports Complex shooting range yesterday, their supporters had their eyes fixed elsewhere.

They spoke in whispers and pointed at the flat-screen monitor as numbers were crunched mentally and permutations analysed carefully.

Despite the best efforts of Vietnam's shooters, the Singapore trio were in line for a surprise gold medal, and their supporters knew it.

So, the moment Lim fired his pistol and laid it down to rest for the 60th time, his teammates screamed in celebration at the country's capture of a fourth shooting gold medal at the South-east Asia (SEA) Games in Laos.

Singapore's combined score of 1,719 was enough to edge out defending cham-



Singapore's Nigel Lim also qualified for the men's 10m air pistol final but missed out on a medal in the end. ST PHOTO: MUGILAN RAJASEGERAN

pions Vietnam (1,710) for their first team title in the event. Thailand took the bronze with 1,696.

Calling it a "breakthrough" for Singapore shooting, Poh said: "There were some expectations on us to perform but this was a great achievement."

For Lim, the gold marked an auspicious start to his SEA Games career. The 30-year-old late bloomer, who joined the national squad only in January last year, said: "As the least experienced member of the team, I'm just happy I was able to contribute."

He did more than that.

His 575 total, close to his personal best of 578, was the highest among his teammates, defending individual champion Gai Bin (571) and four-Games veteran Poh (573).

While acknowledging that he did not

perform at his usual level, Gai said in Mandarin: "My teammates were fantastic today and a gold medal will definitely help with our confidence for the next events here."

All three subsequently qualified for the eight-man shoot-off in the individual category. However, nerves got the better of Lim as he stumbled from joint-first to finish outside the medals with a score of 669.6.

Vietnam's Vinh Hoang Xuan (675.1) took the gold while Poh (672.5) snatched the silver.

Looking disappointed despite consolatory hugs from his teammates, Lim said: "It was my first time in such a big competition and the pressure was unavoidable. But it was a good experience and I'll learn from it."

Despite Lim's stumble in the individu-

al final, Singapore Shooting Association president Chng Seng Mok was clearly pleased with his team's haul of four golds from two days of competition.

"I'm happy we have achieved our target," he said.

Senior Parliamentary Secretary (Community Development, Youth and Sports) Teo Ser Luck, who was part of the cheering Singapore group, was also delighted.

He said: "Shooting is not about physical size, it is about skill, technique and handling pressure which are things that we are well suited towards. This is definitely a sport we should look to invest in."

"Our shooters are young and talented. With the proper support, we have the potential to succeed not only at the SEA Games, but also at the Asian and Olympic level."

jonwong@sph.com.sg