

Youth sports scheme to cater to teenagers

■ BY JONATHAN WONG

EVEN as Singapore waits in anticipation for the inaugural Youth Olympic Games (YOG) to begin next month, steps are being taken to ensure the country's continued involvement in future Games.

Yesterday, the Ministry of Education (MOE) launched the Youth Sports Academies (YSAs), which will provide centralised high-level training for talented teenage athletes from secondary schools, junior colleges and centralised institutes.

Said Senior Parliamentary Secretary (Education and Home Affairs) Masagos Zulkifli at the launch: "We must continue to put in place structures and mechanisms to develop young promising athletes who will go on to do Singapore proud in the future."

Thus, the YSAs are an extension of the

Junior Sports Academies (JSAs) which the MOE started in 2008 for budding primary school athletes. There are now 21 JSAs island-wide with 930 pupils involved in 11 different sports, including football, swimming and track and field.

Both initiatives are after-school programmes which offer selected students training up to four times weekly. Entry into the YSAs is open to all students and not limited to JSA graduates.

Previously, the Singapore Sports School was the only secondary school which specialised in the development of athletes at that age group.

"The YSAs complement the Sports School by providing a developmental pathway for students who are talented in sports but enrolled in regular schools," noted Mr Masagos at yesterday's ceremony at Meridian Junior College in Pasir Ris.

The school, which opened its museum

yesterday, is one of three academies set up and will offer wushu. The other two are Bedok View Secondary (badminton) and the Co-curricular Activities Branch (table tennis).

A total of 49 Secondary 1 students from 20 schools have already enrolled in this year's pioneer batch.

The MOE is targeting up to 10 such academies, involving a wider range of sports, and an estimated 1,000 athletes.

Welcoming the new initiative was shuttler Kelly Tan, who trains twice weekly with the 12-member YSA training squad at Bedok View Secondary in addition to the three sessions with her teammates at Raffles Girls' School.

Though the 13-year-old - who was ranked first in both the recent North Zone and National C Division competitions - is ineligible for the YOG (it is open only to those aged 14 to 18), she is

The various sports schemes

Satellite Sports Centres

- Four have been launched
- To be established in phases in existing facilities such as community centres and sports and recreation centres in the heartland
- Targeted at children and young people aged six to 16
- Will serve as a launch pad for kids to learn and participate in sports they might not have opportunities to play in their schools
- Focus on mass participation

Junior Sports Academies

- 21 island-wide

aiming to represent the Republic at the Nanjing YOG in 2014.

She said: "Being part of the YSA has

- Started in 2008, for sports like badminton, netball, swimming, table tennis, track and field
- Best primary school athletes in each sport are hand-picked to join the academies
- Located at places like the Singapore Sports School
- Goal is to develop future champions

Youth Sports Academies

- Three centres in operation
- Launched officially yesterday
- Same ultimate aim as JSAs, but these are tailored for athletes in secondary schools, junior colleges and centralised institutes

helped me become more focused and determined in my training and hopefully closer to competing in the next YOG."