

## Taking sport climbing to greater heights

**Nicholas Tan**

It was late on Sunday night at the Marina Bay Event Square, but competitors of Gravical 2016, a bouldering competition organised by the Singapore Management University Climb Team, were still fervently tackling climbing routes.

The annual event, which first started in 2007, has attracted an increasing number of participants each year. This year's 10th edition involved 840 overseas and local participants, compared to 800 last year. The four-day event was open to novice and competitive climbers.

With the possibility sport climbing may be included in the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, Singapore Mountaineering Federation president Anthony Seah explained that events like Gravical are important in raising the standard and awareness of the sport in the Republic.

He said: "On the national side, we tend to focus more on the elite level...this direction they (Gravical) are going is very close to the Japanese model, which has many levels from elite all the way down to anybody who can climb."

An estimated 50,000 here climb recreationally, with about 500 of

them climbing competitively.

Seah, who is also the International Federation of Sport Climbing (IFSC) Asian Council's president, said he hopes climbing in Singapore will get more funding: "It's not easy, we are very low in terms of priority (compared to other sports).

"We need the Singapore National Olympic Council and Sport Singapore to see that our sport is growing, there's a big community, and that there's a future in the sport."

At Gravical's finals on Sunday, national climber Dennis Chua won the men's final (Open category) after the 25-year-old reached the end tile for all three set routes in only six attempts, finishing ahead of fellow locals Gavin Yong and Muhammad Hilman Haron.

Indonesia's Fitriah Hartani was the only competitor who reached the end tile in the women's final (Open category), placing her ahead of local climber Judith Sim and fellow Indonesian Nadya Virgita.

Chua, who took part in the IFSC Climbing World Cup in 2014 and 2015, is hopeful that his fellow climbers will get to represent the Republic at the Olympics if the sport does feature in future.

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National climber Dennis Chua in action during the men's final of Gravical 2016 on Sunday.  
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