

# SHANTI'S CAREER BOOST FROM SMU

SEA Games champ is first recipient of Yip Pin Xiu Scholarship, could train in the US

Alvin Chia

Even as national sprinter Shanti Pereira begins a new phase of her life this September when she starts school at the Singapore Management University (SMU), her pursuit of glory on the running track remains a priority.

The SEA Games 200m champion was named the first recipient of the university's Yip Pin Xiu Scholarship yesterday.

The new bond-free bursary, launched last December, is named after Paralympic champion and SMU social sciences undergraduate Yip and is for local elite athletes.

It offers full waiver of tuition fees for four years and an allowance of up to \$12,000 which can be used for a range of programmes, including overseas exchange courses.

It opens up the possibility for Shanti to spend at least a semester at the University of Oregon.

The college is famed for its athletics programme and counts two-time Olympic decathlon champion Ashton Eaton and 4x100m Olympic gold medalist English Gardner among its alumni. Shanti was excited about the prospect of studying and training in America.

"It's a good way to enhance my track performance, so that's a good way the school can support me," said the Republic Polytechnic graduate, who will study a consultancy.

The 20-year-old added that SMU's flexibility in allowing student-athletes to juggle sports and studies was a boon.

"It makes me excited and I feel honoured to receive a scholarship named after Pin Xiu. I definitely want to embody the kind of spirit and (emulate her), who is both a good student and an athlete."

She will likely miss the first two weeks of her new term as she aims to retain her 200m title at the Aug 19-31 Kuala Lumpur Games. She also won a 100m bronze at the 2015 edition in Singapore.

After some indifferent performances last year, her form has picked up. She met the Games' 100m qualifying mark (11.83sec) after she clocked 11.85sec in the heats of a



New Zealand meet in January.

In the final, she clocked the 11.78 sec, which would have broken the national record of 11.80sec but the timing was deemed unofficial as the wind speed of 2.2 metres per second was more than the 2 metres per second allowed by the International Association of Athletics Fed-

erations. She said, "I'm having more confidence in myself now. Last year, I had one bad race and I felt like my head wasn't in it."

She will compete in next month's Singapore Open as part of her final preparations ahead of the biennial Games.

The 25-year-old Yip, who won

two gold medals at last year's Paralympic Games, said: "It's great that SMU is so supportive towards athletes, especially for Shanti who is aiming for greater achievements at the SEA Games and the Asian Games."

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Shanti Pereira is the first recipient of the Yip Pin Xiu Scholarship.

National sprinter Shanti Pereira poses with Yip Pin Xiu at a reception yesterday, when she was awarded a Singapore Management University scholarship that bears the three-time Paralympic champion's name.  
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