

SAA thinks long term in search for foreign head coach

By MAY CHEN

THE Singapore Athletic Association (SAA) is looking abroad for a national head coach to help local athletes become contenders at the Asian level.

Rather than just aim for glory on home soil at the 2015 SEA Games, SAA president Tang Weng Fei said the move is targeted at long-term growth for the sport here.

The Straits Times understands that there are two applicants – from Russia and Uzbekistan – so far, even before the association has begun advertising for the position.

Both are in their 50s and have

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STEPPING UP

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previously coached their respective national teams.

Said Tang: “We’re going to have to think further than just 2015, and we want to look for

someone who has the credentials to bring our athletes up to the Asian Games level.”

He added that the SAA will also likely appoint a local as its perma-

nent head of high performance, replacing vice-president (competitions organising) Loh Chan Pew, who has acted as interim chief since March last year.

“We’ll take a look at more (candidates) and try to get everything settled by the second quarter of the year,” added Tang.

The new national head coach is likely to help narrow the Singapore team’s focus on the sprints, hurdles and horizontal jumps – events which Tang feels the Republic has potential to excel in.

Shanti Pereira, for instance, was third in the 200m at the Asian Junior Athletics Championships in 2012 and has been touted as the region’s future sprint queen. The 17-year-old holds

both Singapore’s sprint national records.

Said Tang: “Track and field is a sport where you cannot be a jack of all trades. You have to specialise in something and we have a good chance in the sprints and horizontal jumps.”

National sprinter Gary Yeo feels that while looking overseas for coaches with proven credentials is a good move, he or she must also be a good fit for the local athletes.

He said: “It’ll be a step in the right direction if it’s someone with better credentials, but the new coach must understand the Singapore culture as well. There are a lot of factors to consider.”

Yeo, 27, is part of the national

men’s 4x100m relay team who trained full-time last year in a bid to qualify for the world championships in Moscow and win the relay gold at last month’s SEA Games.

Neither materialised – the team finished second in Myanmar behind Thailand – but they have their eyes set on a top-six finish at this year’s Commonwealth Games in Glasgow and Asian Games in Incheon.

Said Yeo, who is resuming his studies as a business undergraduate at the Singapore Management University: “This is sports. You can only look forward to the next goal. We are still aiming for gold in 2015 – that will always be a target.”

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