

SINGAPORE'S FIFTH GRANDMASTER

Pending ratification, Tin, 21, is also the nation's youngest to earn top ranking

Fresh from winning three SEA Games medals in Vietnam earlier this month, Singapore's top-ranked chess player Tin Jingyao is set to become the nation's fifth and youngest grandmaster after more sterling performances in the Hanoi GM Chess Tournament.

The 21-year-old won seven and drew two of his nine rounds to win the event yesterday, but with a Round 8 draw with Filipino Paulo Bersamina on Saturday, Tin had already met the criteria to become a grandmaster – pending ratification by the International Chess Federation (Fide).

He told *The Straits Times*: "I'm very happy and relieved because I have been working towards this for the last couple of years, and events have been hard to come by because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

"I intend to continue playing chess seriously and aim to increase my Fide rating to 2,600. Learning and improving is a very fun process – when I'm able to show results in tournaments, it is a good feeling."

Tin, who is a first-year computer science undergraduate at the National University of Singapore,

added: "The SEA Games was a first for me and a very fun experience which I want to go through again, so I hope chess can continue to be part of major Games and Singapore can send a bigger chess team."

To score the three norms to become a grandmaster, the highest rank in the sport, a player has to participate in norm tournaments that have at least three grandmasters, nine rounds and a time control that is at least 120 minutes.

The player must also have a 2,600 Elo performance rating for these tournaments, and cross the 2,500 Fide rating.

Tin's first grandmaster norm came in 2015 when he won the Asean Under-20 tournament, which also gave him the direct International Master title. He earned his second grandmaster at the recent SEA Games.

"I'm really happy with my performance... I did not expect to win six out of the first seven games and many even with the black pieces," said Tin in an Instagram post by Singapore Chess Federation vice-president Kevin Goh, who is the Republic's fourth grandmaster.

"This event has given me some good confidence in my own abilities, calculation and openings. I think in terms of level of play, it's probably my best event yet."

Ranked 705th among the world's active players, Tin is known for his ability to defend



well and outmanoeuvre his opponents.

The five-time national champion will next compete at the Grand Copthorne Waterfront Prof Lim Kok Ann Grandmaster invita-

tional during the June 12-19 Singapore Chess Festival. He will then lead the national team at the World Chess Olympiad in Chennai, India from July 28 to Aug 10.

Tin's impending promotion is an-

other milestone in his meteoric rise since he picked up chess at eight after discovering the game online while using the computer at his aunt's house.

He was just 10 when he and 21

Tin Jingyao, who won three SEA Games medals in Vietnam earlier this month, is ranked 705th among the world's active players.

PHOTO: SINGAPORE CHESS FEDERATION

other enthusiasts simultaneously played (and lost to) Russian chess legend and former world champion Garry Kasparov in an event at the Serangoon Gardens Country Club.

He earned the praise of the former world No. 1 for his moves and for being the last player standing.

At the Hanoi SEA Games, Tin won silver in the men's rapid chess and two bronzes in the men's standard individual and blitz.

Goh said: "It is an amazing achievement but in many aspects, it is not a surprise to us because of his dedication to chess. During training, we have also seen his ability to jump to the next level.

"Even when he was facing tough scenarios, such as when he lost in the third round at the SEA Games with the white pieces (starting first), he displayed good resilience and tenacity to win a medal."

Singapore's other three grandmasters are Zhang Zhong, Wu Shaobin and Wong Meng Kong, while SEA Games medallist Gong Qianyun is a woman grandmaster.

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