



Malaysia's **Muhamad Khairul Azhar Zakaria** (right) beat Vietnam's **Nguyen Khac Nghia** in the semi-finals of the Deputy Prime Minister's International Pencak Silat Cup yesterday. Pic by Mohd Khairul Helmy

SILAT

Khairul roars into final

MUHAMAD Khairul Azhar Zakaria did his chances of making the Myanmar Sea Games squad this year no harm when he eased into the final of the Deputy Prime Minister's International Pencak Silat Cup with a flawless performance yesterday.

Backed by a roaring crowd, the defending champion was rarely tested in a clinical 5-0 win over Vietnam's Nguyen Khac Nghia in the semi-finals of the men's 60-65kg silat olahraga category at Dataran Pahlawan Melaka Megamall in Malacca.

Khairul, who beat Thailand's Hafit A. Davy 5-0 in the quarter-finals on Wednesday, said he was delighted with his performance in the tournament so far.

He will face Thailand's Sakda Omkao, who upset Singaporean Muhd Nurshahrin Shahrudin 5-0 in the other semi-final, today.

"Nguyen was very strong and at-

tacked with pace, using his powerful sidekicks.

"I am very happy to have overcome him," said the 22-year-old.

"It (the win) certainly gives me some confidence to defend my title tomorrow (today)."

The 70-75kg men's category saw Vietnam's Ha Quoc Dat and Singapore's Muhd Nur Alfian Juma'en qualify for the final.

Ha eased past Thailand's Hakrif Mahlee 5-0 while Muhd Nur Alfian edged Nguyen Cong Chi Loe (Vietnam) 3-2 in the semi-finals.

The men's 50-55kg category final will see Malaysia's Muhammad Faiz Nur Rosli and Nantha Achai Khansakhon of Thailand squaring off for gold in the

final today.

Their respective semi-final opponents, who were also their compatriots, Muhamad Faizul M. Nasir (Malaysia) and Adisorn Samya (Thailand) both pulled out.

The move was largely seen as a strategic battle between both countries. **By Fadhli Ishak**



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