

# Karate SA celebrates 21 years

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THE Chatsworth-based International Federation of Funakoshi Shotokan Karate South Africa is celebrating its 21st anniversary this year.

To mark this auspicious occasion it is flying in world famous karate expert Kancho Funakoshi. The 65-year-old Japanese master is the fourth cousin of the late founder of modern karate, Gichin Funakoshi.

The organisation has put together R50 000 to bring Kancho Funakoshi to South Africa.

"We have spent that much because we know it would be worthwhile. One of our aims is to bring him here for development purposes. We not only want our people to learn from him but we also intend to bring the Japanese masters to the kids. Kancho will also give children lessons," said chief instructor of the SA federation Eric Govender.



**SENSEI Eric Govender (right) demonstrates correct technique to a group of students**

There have been very few karate experts who can claim to have the sport directly handed down to them by a legend. Today, the greatest living student of Gichin Funakoshi is Kancho Kanazawa. The Japanese have also developed youngsters in KwaZulu-Natal through the Shotokan Karate International SA.

The Funakoshi federation's main

intention is to create awareness. It feels there is no better way to do so with a direct descendant of Gichin Funakoshi.

The legendary master Gichin was himself a student of the two greatest fighting technicians of the 19th century Azato and Itosu in Okinawa. Gichin went on to develop the sport into a style we know

today as karate-do which means the way of karate. He taught discipline and expressed himself poetically in the art of karate which he called the Shotokan style. In originating this technique, he removed the bad aspects of the ancient Chinese art and included the hand and feet styles for self defence.

Gichin educated his students on

having a strong mind as well as how to master blocking, punching, kicking and striking. On top of this they had to maximise their power, speed, timing, rhythm, breathing and spirit. Gichin concentrated on teaching kata and also developed a little kumite. Decades later Funakoshi Karate was founded in South Africa during the early 1960s by Kancho Eddie Ward who now lives in Canada.

The form was headed by Shihan Chris Botha, 7th Dan who represented South Africa at International Karate Tournaments in 1978 and 1979 and was a world veteran champion in both Kata and Kumite in 1995 and 1997.

Funakoshi Shotokan Karate is organising a special tournament to commemorate the anniversary. Shihan Govender is dubbing this the Africa Funakoshi Cup, since there will be teams from as far afield as Ghana and Senegal. Participants from all provinces around the country have been invited. There will also be a guest team from India.

"I've been in this organisation for 21 years but I have been practicing karate for 35 years.

"This is a special occasion and everyone should enter," said Govender, who recently received an award for his long-standing contribution to karate.