BUILT FOR SUCCESS

State-of-the-art venues bring the wow factor
RARING FOR THE GAMES TO BEGIN

Ma Long, Chinese world and Olympic table tennis champion
"I always think of table tennis as a bridge to connect us. At the Asian Games, the sport is in the spotlight and the competition is always fierce. More importantly, there is communication. Smaller associations in Asia probably have limited opportunities to play at high-level international events. But at the Asian Games, they have a lot more chances to shine."

Gong Lijiao, Chinese world and Olympic shot put champion
"I hope I can win gold again in Hangzhou, which will be my fourth time competing at the Asian Games. This time it’s special as it’s a home event. I also want to welcome all the Asian athletes who will compete in Hangzhou. I hope all of them can produce their best at the games."

Vinod Kumar Tiwari, acting director general of the Olympic Council of Asia
"It really is a pleasure to see that, after three years of the pandemic, the interest that these games have generated is huge because this will be the first major multi sport international event which will be held without any restrictions. So we’re very happy to be here in Hangzhou, and hopefully with all the support, we will have the best Asian Games in history."

Mohammad Idris Jafari, Afghan boxer
"Our only wish is to bring the gold medal to Afghanistan. We can bring smiles to the faces of our countrymen through sports. I am keen to experience the Afghan culture and visit the historical and recreational landmarks of China during my trip there so it will be a cultural trip as well."

Zhou Jian, director of the Olympic Council of Asia’s Media and Broadcast Department
"The preparation work has gone perfectly and the organizers have put in a huge amount of effort. We can see this in the competition schedule, the preparation of venues, as well as the set-up and adjustment of all the hardware and software facilities. I prefer to save my emotions for the opening day. But the ceremony must be truly wonderful because many of my colleagues who saw rehearsals said they were so stunned and they even shed tears."

Zhu Yaming, Tokyo Olympics triple jump silver medalist from China
"My target is to see the national flag raised in track and field. It’s pressure as well as motivation to compete on home soil. I will try my best to surpass myself and achieve the best result."

Yondonperenlei Baskhuu, two-time world judo bronze medalist from Mongolia
"I am participating in the Asian Games for the first time. I will compete in the 66-kilogram category. My preparations for the games have gone very well and I want to be a champion. I have great expectations that this event will be beautiful."

Ng Ser Miang, vice-president of the International Olympic Committee
"The Asian Games will provide a great opportunity, in this beautiful place of Hangzhou, for these athletes to share experiences, culture and diversity, heart to heart and under the same roof."

Chandal Phiathep, coach of the Laos national sepak takraw team
"I think the Hangzhou Asian Games can unite Asia and play a positive role. The Asian Games hosted by China will promote unity and friendship in Asia."

Chen Yufei, a Hangzhou native, reigning Olympic women’s singles badminton champion
"Asian countries and regions boast elite-level badminton players. The sport’s competitiveness at the Asian Games is pretty much the same as the Olympics. It will be a big challenge for me and I will try to reward the local people’s support with my best performance."

Raja Sapta Oktohari, chairman of Indonesia’s Olympic Committee
"We want to show the Indonesians the proper way of building infrastructure for sports, and I believe China sets a very good example for that. So hopefully, after returning from the Asian Games in Hangzhou, we can develop better infrastructure for sports. We are looking forward to a great event in Hangzhou."

Pierre Jakh, president of the Lebanese Olympic Committee
"I believe the government of China is keen to offer something unique which shows the capabilities they have. I expect everything to be excellent in Hangzhou. We can see this from the Winter Games that took place in 2022 when the organization was superb, and I believe this will be reflected in the upcoming games."

CHINA DAILY
Host with the most ready to shine

Local legend Li Lingwei says Asiad is perfect platform to showcase Zhejiang’s diverse delights

By SUN XIAochen and MA ZHENHUA in Hangzhou

Born and raised in Zhejiang, Chinese badminton legend and veteran sports administrator Li Lingwei says her home province is ready to showcase its many delights to the world as host of the 19th Asian Games.

With two days to go before the Asian Games flame lights up China for the third time in history, Li took a stroll down memory lane as she highlighted the sporting gala’s positive influence on the nation over the past three decades.

“After so long, I can still hear, feel and visualize the passion of the crowd filling the streets to watch the relay and how excited each face looked,” Li, a retired badminton world champion, recalled of running a leg of the 1990 Beijing Asian Games torch relay at Hangzhou’s WuJin Square.

“The Chinese people’s enthusiasm for sports and their hospitality made a strong first impression on the world stage 33 years ago. The expectation has grown higher with Hangzhou more than ready to host Asia’s very best at a well-organized sporting spectacle,” added Li, an International Olympic Committee member who also serves as a deputy secretary-general of the Hangzhou Asian Games Organizing Committee.

Adhering to the highest standards in sustainability, hospitality and technology, Hangzhou, supported by five co-host cities, is primed to deliver an even bigger and better Asiad, following the 1990 Beijing and 2010 Guangzhou editions. Organizers are confident that the games will maintain China’s impeccable track record of delivering its bid promises when staging major global events.

The Hangzhou Asiad, which includes both Olympic and non-Olympic sports, will see about 12,500 athletes from all 45 national and regional Olympic committees in Asia compete in a record 481 medal events through Oct 8, making it the biggest ever edition of the games.

Esports and breaking, a street dancing discipline, will make their debuts as official medal events on the Asian Games program in Hangzhou, where Olympic qualification quotas for Paris 2024 will be up for grabs in nine sports.

“Anticipation levels are high and I am sure Hangzhou will be worth the wait. Records will fall and new mile-stones will be accomplished in Hangzhou,” said Li, a 13-time badminton world champion who is also an executive council member of the Association of National Olympic Committees. Yasuhiro Inomata, deputy secretary-general of the 2026 Asian Games organizing committee in Japan, expressed high hopes for Hangzhou. “Every venue is fantastic, and the staff, as well as the volunteers, are enthusiastic. Especially when riding the subway, the synchronized promotional videos playing outside the windows are awe-inspiring,” said Inomata, who visited Hangzhou during a venue tour in April.

Raja Sapta Okothari, chairman of the Indonesian Olympic Committee, is treating the Hangzhou games as an invaluable learning experience in sports infrastructure planning and construction.

“We want to show the Indonesians the proper way of building infrastructure for sports, and I believe China sets a very good example for that … We are looking forward to a great spectacle hosted by Hangzhou,” said Okothari.

With China earning a reputation for hosting events with a wow factor in recent decades, organizers nowadays are more focused on sustainability and legacy, especially integrating infrastructure into urban rejuvenation projects.

Hangzhou’s emphasis on reusing existing facilities, opening venues for public use in the pre-games stage and upgrading city infrastructure in line with preparations for the Asiad have set an example for future hosts, Li noted.

“There has been a growing consensus among international sports governing bodies in recent years that Chinese organizers always deliver on their guarantee,” said Li, who was also heavily involved in preparations for both the Beijing 2008 Summer and 2022 Winter Olympics.

“The Chinese government’s commitment to deliver, the organizational expertise of experienced staff and the overwhelming public support have made China a safe and reliable destination for international sports events,” she said.

Li also encouraged more athletes from China to embrace administrative and managerial roles after retirement, especially with international governing bodies.

“Chinese athletes these days are more confident than our generation and they’ve had greater exposure to foreign languages, different cultures and the rules and regulations of international organizations.

“I hope that more athletes in the twilight of their athletic careers will seriously consider getting involved in international sports administration.

“We’ve produced enough world-class athletes, we’ve hosted major sports events of all kinds, and it’s time to further enhance China’s presence in the global sports community more comprehensively,” Li said.

As a native of Zhejiang, Li said she urged all Asian Games participants to experience the provincial capital’s rich array of historical and cultural attractions, as well as sample the city’s authentic daily life.

“We don’t need to sell them all the scenic spots, or must-visit attractions, or tell them how pleasant Hangzhou is. The city’s charm speaks for itself,” she said. “As long as they learn and experience with their own eyes and minds, word of mouth will spread the message to the rest of the world.”

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Smart venues get the green light

High-tech, environmentally conscious stadia and facilities have been put through their paces ahead of the games to ensure full event readiness.

Mazen Rehman reports

As the afternoon of Aug 30, a western-style ceremony for the table tennis competition took place at the Hangzhou Olympic Sports Centre Aquatic Stadium, located within the Hangzhou Olympic Sports Complex.

The venue is a key part of the Hangzhou Olympic Sports Centre, one of the most important projects in the city, and will host the 19th Asian Games.

The venue is designed to host table tennis competitions, but also serves as a multi-purpose venue for various events such as concerts, exhibitions, and cultural activities.

The stadium features an indoor arena with a seating capacity of 10,000, along with a 2,000-seat outdoor arena. The indoor arena can be converted into a multi-purpose hall for other events.

The venue is equipped with state-of-the-art technology and facilities, including advanced lighting, acoustics, and climate control systems.

The design of the roof and the shape of the stadium are inspired by the principles of "open air" and "green" concepts, with a large roof that provides natural light and ventilation.

The Hangzhou Olympic Sports Centre is a model for sustainable and innovative architecture, setting new standards for future sport facilities.

The stadium is expected to host a variety of international competitions and events, showcasing Hangzhou's commitment to hosting high-quality sporting events and promoting a healthy lifestyle for the city's residents.

The stadium is part of a larger complex that includes hotels, restaurants, and other amenities, providing a complete experience for visitors and athletes alike.

The Hangzhou Olympic Sports Centre is a testament to Hangzhou's vision for a sustainable and thriving city, setting a new standard for future sport facilities and inspiring others to follow.
Planning for a shared future

With renewable energy sources, and steps in place for their post-games use, competition venues stand as testament to the organizers’ environmental mission.

‘Green Games’ has become a calling card for the Hangzhou Asian Games.

To make the games the world’s first waste-free large-scale sporting event, green energy sources have been implemented at all 56 competition venues.

Some of the renewable electricity used at the venues is photovoltaic energy, transmitted from areas such as the Qaidam Basin in Qinghai province, Jiayu Pass in Gansu province and northern-central China’s Loess Plateau, while another source is wind power generated in areas including the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region.

A digital-management platform was also launched to help achieve carbon neutrality during the Asian Games.

On the platform, digital technologies are used in the management of carbon emissions from venues in six cities — Hangzhou and the co-host cities of Ningbo, Wenzhou, Jinhua, Shaoxing and Huzhou — such as data collection, accounting, emissions reduction and evaluation.

Among all 56 competition venues, including 19 for the Asian Para Games, just 12 are newly built, while the rest are existing facilities that have been renovated and refurbished as part of the organizers’ sustainable approach.

The Shangcheng Sports Centre Stadium, the venue for football events at the games, was built in 2019. During the renovation of the venue, its solar-film ceiling and spectator seating, which have been used for 14 years but remain in good condition, have been retained after being fully and scientifically assessed. It helped reduce construction costs by nearly 8 million yuan ($1.09 million).

The race track of the velodrome of the Chun’an Jieshou Sports Centre is covered with 374 interchangeable components, which will ensure its sustainable use after the competition.

While preparing for the games, Zhejiang also promoted public access to the venues and hosted sports events in them. Despite the one-year delay of the games due to the pandemic, the venues have not been left idle.

Since May 2022, all the available venues have received 10 million visitors, enabling the public to experience their world-class facilities.

After the games, its venues will continue to be used for sports and public fitness.

Venue owners and operators have developed post-games plans for 51 venues, which are expected to host mass fitness activities, professional training programs for national and provincial teams, and additional international events.
A cool place to hang out

Award-winning Yangshan Sport Climbing Centre is a marvel of design and construction, boasting a unique blend of semi-open architecture, stunning views and smart technologies.

Yangshan Sport Climbing Centre in Shaoxing, Zhejiang province, is the world’s first fully functional permanent climbing competition venue, PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Engineering Design Group, with Huang Huiming as the lead architect, the building is characterized by a harmonious blend of the local landscape and culture. The “coconut” was built on the site of a former quarry dating back over 1,500 years. It is believed that Gou-jian, a king of the Spring and Autumn Period (770-475 BC), used giant stones from the quarry to build the ancient city of Shaoxing, endowing the quarry site with unique and spectacular landscapes.

In the 1960s, the area was filled with soil and mulberry trees were planted, serving as a silkworm farming base for local villagers. However, in the 1990s, the silkworm industry gradually faded away, leaving the site in disrepair and overgrown with weeds.

As Hangzhou is known as the “Silk Capital” and Shaoxing is globally renowned for its textile industry, the design team had the vision to create a monument that would honor both legacies.

“The coconut has been crafted and serves as a bridge between the past and present, and is also a symbol of transformation and rebirth,” according to the design team.

In addition, the venue’s design adopts the gardening techniques of borrowing and dividing. Through the hollowed-out curtain wall, audiences are able to enjoy the natural landscapes around it.

“Sport climbing is often described as ‘ballet on rocks’ and, originally, was exclusively an outdoor activity. So the ancient giant rocks that remained here are a perfect fit for the sport.”

Huang Huiming, an architect for the Asian Games climbing venue as ‘ballet on rocks’ and, originally, was exclusively an outdoor activity. The ancient giant rocks that remained here are a perfect fit for the sport,” said Huang.

Innovation abounds

The venue was constructed with the innovative use of ultra-high-performance concrete (UHPC) panels. The architect’s curtain-wall system is composed of 1,800 perforated UHPC panels, which envelop the structure, harmoniously blending the building into the environment while reducing its energy consumption.

“We conducted dozens of experiments to choose the most suitable construction materials. UHPC won out, as it’s really robust yet looks very simple and light. The combination of rigidity and softness perfectly suits sport climbing as well,” Huang explained.

The venue’s semi-open design is economical while also blurring the boundary between indoor and outdoor spaces, creating a shared, open space for the community.

Meanwhile, with a 55-percent perforation rate, the creative design shields athletes from glare and light pollution while enhancing natural light, shading, ventilation, and energy efficiency.

Some sport climbers said this is the most beautiful and comfortable venue that they have experienced, and they can even see the moon and stars when climbing,” Huang added.

Wang Bingyuan, the warm-up training supervisor at the center, echoed those sentiments: “This venue is big and well-equipped with all kinds of facilities. When one climbs to the top and looks back, a stunning view of Yangshan Quarry Heritage Park unfolds through the perforation design. It is very impressive.”

A bright idea

The coconut-shaped center is not only attractive during the day but also showcases its grandeur at night, thanks to smart lighting systems and effects.

Indeed, intelligent technologies have been applied throughout the venue.

Before construction began, the design team employed methods such as digital modeling to assemble the giant UHPC panels. The application of a building information modeling (BIM) system integrates parametric design, construction, transportation and maintenance, combining to greatly improve the center’s efficiency.

Construction began in April 2021 and, remarkably, was completed in April 2022. Huang also noted that smart skylights can be easily controlled to cater to different weather, temperature and humidity conditions, in a bid to make the most of the natural light and save energy.

The venue uses green electricity, which is generated by wind power from northwestern China.
Building a sustainable legacy

State-of-the-art venues all stand on a foundation of minimum waste, maximum functionality

Hangzhou, along with the five co-host cities of Ningbo, Wenzhou, Huzhou, Shaoxing and Jinhua in Zhejiang province, has promised an environmentally friendly Asian Games. From the construction, and in some cases restoration, of the venues, to their operation and utilization both during and after the games, sustainability has been integrated into every detail of the preparations, according to the Hangzhou Asian Games Organizing Committee.

Out of the 96 competition venues for the games, only 12 are newly built. The remaining 84, along with 31 training venues, are all renovated from, or temporarily built on, existing sites.

“We have combined Asian Games infrastructure with urban development and construction planning of the host cities,” said Qi Pei, director of venue construction on the Hangzhou Asian Games Organizing Committee. “We stick to the principle that the construction of the competition venues is not only for the Asian Games, but also an upgrade to the overall facilities in each city that will serve the communities in the long run.”

To ensure sustainability of the venues, the concept of minimum waste has been applied to each one.

Before the renovation of each of the existing venues, the facilities and equipment were comprehensively evaluated for continued use, either for the games or in other places, he said.

Hangzhou Dianzi University Gymnasium, for example, will host the fencing events for the Asian Games and Asian Para Games.

The gymnasium has more than 5,000 seats which have been used since it opened 17 years ago, but they remain in good condition. The organizing committee decided to disassemble and clean the seats and put them back to use in the gym.

The LED screens in the gymnasium, which have been in service for six years, were also relocated to the university’s swimming and fitness center for continued use, according to Wang Shuai, director of waste disposal of the venue operation team of Hangzhou Dianzi University Gymnasium.

In terms of the configuration of facilities and equipment for the competition venues, the organizing committee also applies the principle of minimum waste.

The China Textile City Sports Centre Gymnasium in Shaoxing, originally a basketball stadium, will host the volleyball competitions at the Asian Games. To enable the conversion, a special rubber floor was rented, which is directly laid on the original floor of the basketball court.

“Upon the completion of the games, we can simply return the rubber floor and convert the gym back into a basketball arena,” said Dong Gudan, the gym’s publicity officer.

Most of the facilities for the temporary venues are set for reuse, as it is the case in the configuration of the Asian Games’ squash courts, which are located in a converted exhibition hall of the Hangzhou International Expo Center.

According to Zhou Congrong, director of facilities operation and maintenance of the squash venue, the eight squash courts installed for the games will continue to be used after the games.

“One will be donated to the Asian Games Museum and the other seven will be relocated to communities, schools and other educational institutions, continuing to play a role in promoting squash,” Zhou said.

Sustainability is also highlighted in the daily operation of the competition venues.

At the Hangzhou Olympic Sports Centre Aquatic Sports Arena — the competition and training venue for swimming, diving, artistic swimming events — light pipes have been installed to introduce outdoor light during the day and solar-powered light at night.

The venue has a water-storage capacity of more than 10,000 tons. Its continuous water-circulation system will automatically detect and disinfect used water. This will save up to 90,000 tons a year, which is equivalent to the annual consumption of 4,000 people.

To save water, a 24-hour uninterrupted water circulation and disinfection system has been installed to ensure that the water in the pools stays clean and clear without the need to change it regularly.

Sustainability is also manifested in the way the competition venues will continue to operate and benefit the host cities after the games, Qi said.

“We have taken into consideration, and gone to great lengths, to ensure the best use of the competition venues after the games,” Qi said. “The best scenario is these venues will be able to make money on their own to sustain their daily operation.”

The Hangzhou Esports Centre, a newly built venue, is expected to serve as a good example of this. While the center will continue to serve as a key venue for esports, it is also designed to host ball games, concerts, theatrical performances and trade shows to achieve a full range of social benefits.

From left: Asian Games squash courts, the China Textile City Sports Centre Gymnasium in Shaoxing and the Hangzhou Olympic Sports Centre Aquatic Sports Arena.