

# Asian Games begin with another awesome Chinese masterpiece on Haixinsha Island

After storming the sporting world by hosting a spectacular Olympics and topping the medals tally at Beijing two years ago, Guangzhou on Friday came up with a breathtaking opening ceremony to unfurl the 16th Asian Games in pomp and style.

If the Olympics displayed China's economic might and sporting prowess, Guangzhou has reinforced China's growing status as a superpower by pumping in billions of dollars in putting up the show in the prosperous and sprawling city in the Pearl River Delta.

The ceremony, set on tiny Haixinsha Island on the Pearl River, which runs through the heart of Guangzhou, drew traditional southern Chinese culture and featured a strong watery theme. The sea of colors, the fireworks, and the technical innovation of the entire show left everyone awestruck.

And when Olympic and Asian Games diving champion He Chong lit the Asian Games cauldron by setting off a giant firecracker, China once again wowed the world with its creativity.

Two decades after the Beijing Asian Games in 1990 underscored China's rapid strides in the sporting arena, the country is hosting the biggest games ever. The 15-day mega event will witness a conglomeration of 9,704 athletes from 45 Asian countries and regions.

The organizers have added 12 new competition venues besides sprucing up subways, ports and city streets in creating a fabulous infrastructure.

— THE INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

## Fireworks light up host city

A spectacular display of colorful lighting and dazzling fireworks soared above Guangzhou city, leaving thousands of spectators spellbound to raise the curtain of the 16th Asian Games on Friday night.

At this Asian Games, Malaysia is banking on its largest contingent ever, comprising 337 athletes and 126 officials.

The athletes will be competing in 28 of the 42 sports events on offer.

Nine Malaysian athletes and officials were onboard the Malaysian boat, which was decorated with two of Malaysia's famous buildings, the Sultan Abdul Samad building and the Petronas Twin Towers.

— BERNAMA (MALAYSIA)

## Pandas steal the show at Asiad

China has marked the opening of the 16th Asian Games in the southern city of Guangzhou with a lavish show of fireworks.

However, it was a group of pandas that stole the show. The 12 giant pandas in the Guangzhou Xiangjiang Safari Park form the "Asian Games Panda Group".

After six years of planning and billions of dollars worth of investment, Guangzhou city has been transformed to make sure it plays the perfect host.

— AL JAZEERA (QATAR)

## Singapore paddlers eye historic win

Starting on Saturday, 240 athletes from Singapore will strive to shine at the Asian Games in Guangzhou.

The haul of eight gold, seven silver and 12 bronze medals from the Doha Games in 2006 was a record for the Republic, and Low Teo Ping, the chef-de-mission for the 16th Asian Games, predicts Singapore will return with an even bigger haul from Guangzhou.

Maybe the Republic's table tennis women can deliver a historic triumph in China.

If the two top-ranked teams in the women's game meet in the Asian Games final as expected, the winners will end the year as the best in the world.

The Republic's sprint legend Canagasabai Kunalan feels gold in the women's table tennis team event would be one of the biggest achievements in the history of Singapore sport.

— TODAY (SINGAPORE)

## Malaysians to surpass target

Malaysian badminton team manager Datuk Maijol Manap has thrown the gauntlet to the shuttlers — surpass the one-gold target!

Maijol said that although China would be the favorites, Malaysia would be strong challengers in two events — men's singles and men's

doubles — through world No 1s Lee Chong Wei and Koo Kien Keat-Tan Boon Heong.

"In fact, we have a chance to win a medal in the team event. Hopefully, the team will do better than they did in Doha," he said. "A good showing in the team event will certainly lift their morale to do even better in the individual events."

— THE STAR (MALAYSIA)

## Indian wrestlers face challenge

Indian wrestlers may be going into the Asian Games with their confidence levels at an all-time high after their record-breaking gold medal haul at the Commonwealth Games last month.

But the 18-member squad, sans world champion Sushil Kumar, will face a tougher challenge in Guangzhou with wrestlers some being reigning world champions from the traditional powerhouses of the sport featuring in the continental extravaganza.

India's forte has always been freestyle event with the country winning five of the six medals in that segment in the last edition of the games in Doha.

— TNN (INDIA)

## Better than the Olympic Games

China painted a memorable canvas on the sky, as lithe girls danced on water and strong men jumped



ZHANG CHENLIANG / CHINA DAILY

around high in the air, in front of four huge sail-boat screens that towered above the arena to mark the opening ceremony of the 16th Asian Games here on Friday.

The city was lit up beautifully — the Canton tower stood majestically on one side and the skyscrapers with colorful lighting formations provided a brilliant backdrop.

Gagan Narang carried the flag for India and the contingent was

almost in strength to imbibe the energy of the electrifying atmosphere.

It was a ceremony that surpassed everything that has been performed in all the Olympics including the Beijing Games. In taking the opening ceremony away from the limitations of a stadium, Guangzhou turned the whole area into an amphitheatre. It was art and craft at its best.

— THE HINDU (INDIA)