

# Building bigger and better games

OCA CHIEF BELIEVES ASIAD CAN BECOME AS HIGHLY RESPECTED AS THE OLYMPICS

By LEI LEI  
CHINA DAILY

GUANGZHOU — The Asian Games will continue to grow and deliver higher standards of excellence until they become as widely respected as the Olympics, the head of the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) said.

The quadrennial games are the biggest sporting event in Asia, but there is still a gulf between the two huge sports festivals — a gap Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahad Al-Sabah has been proud to see shrink every four years over the past two decades.

“We are proud because we are following in the footsteps of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) movement, with its guidance and under its umbrella, and we are trying to reach its level,” Sheikh Ahmad told China Daily.

“That’s why we are proud, because we’re not doing something that’s far removed from (the Olympics),” he said. “We are keeping the unity and the solidarity, and we are doing a good job.”

Since the Kuwaiti assumed his current post in 1991, he has witnessed Asia’s sporting march on the world scene as various countries and athletes have established themselves as powerhouses, such as the Republic of Korea (ROK)’s women golfers.

At the Olympics, Asian countries and regions, especially China, Japan and the ROK, have also made great strides in terms of their gold medal rankings.

China has improved steadily with each Summer Games since Atlanta 1996, and it leapfrogged the United States to lead the gold-medal table in Beijing two years ago.

Japan peaked at Athens 2004 by ranking No 5, and the ROK managed its best rank of fifth at Beijing 2008.

IOC President Jacques Rogge said he has also been impressed by Asia’s sporting rise over the past decade.

For Sheikh Ahmad, one of his most important tasks is how to sustain this trend.

“We have a lot of plans for further development,” said the 47-year-old. “There are about 12 new games in Asia. I have to think about the beach games, the indoor games, the winter games, the youth games and the Asian games. This is a big program.”



EDMOND TANG / CHINA DAILY

Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahad Al-Sabah, president of the OCA, checks out the Asiaddaily with China Daily reporter Lei Lei.

The fast growing number of sports, athletes and international tournaments provides a perfect platform for Asian countries to experience organizing huge events and put themselves on the radar.

Meanwhile, the 16th Asiad in Guangzhou is believed to be the largest multi-sports event ever held — even bigger than the Olympics as it features 476 events in 42 sports.

The OCA’s varied portfolio of multi-sports events will give all 45 members of the OCA an opportunity to stage international competitions, said Sheikh Ahmad.

After almost one week of Asiad action in Guangzhou, he said he expects to see more Asian and world records broken.

“I’m so happy to see that west Asian countries and regions are sending more and more female athletes this time, and I think that

## HOW THE GAMES HAVE GROWN

Year	Games	Host	Dates	Nations/regions	Athletes	Sports	Events
1951	I	New Delhi	March 4–11	11	489	6	57
1954	II	Manila	May 1–9	19	970	8	76
1958	III	Tokyo	May 24–June 1	16	1,820	13	97
1962	IV	Jakarta	Aug 24–Sept 4	12	1,460	13	88
1966	V	Bangkok	Dec 9–20	16	1,945	14	143
1970	VI	Bangkok	Aug 24–Sept 4	16	2,400	13	135
1974	VII	Teheran	Sept 1–16	19	3,010	16	202
1978	VIII	Bangkok	Dec 9–20	19	3,842	19	201
1982	IX	New Delhi	Nov 19–Dec 4	23	3,411	21	147
1986	X	Seoul	Sept 20–Oct 5	22	4,839	25	270
1990	XI	Beijing	Sept 22–Oct 7	36	6,122	29	310
1994	XII	Hiroshima, Japan	Oct 2–16	42	6,828	34	337
1998	XIII	Bangkok	Dec 6–20	41	6,554	36	376
2002	XIV	Busan, ROK	Sept 29–Oct 14	44	7,711	38	419
2006	XV	Doha	Dec 1–15	45	9,520	39	424
2010	XVI	Guangzhou, China	Nov 12–27	45	9,704	42	476

the games are the best in the history of the Asian Games.”

The next edition will be held in 2014 in Incheon, the ROK. The sports program will be scaled

down to 35 sports — 28 Olympic plus seven non-Olympic sports reflecting the diverse sporting culture of Asia’s five zones.

Although the final list won’t be

decided until the OCA executive board meeting in Muscat, Oman, from Dec 8-16, cricket and karate will definitely be on the program, he said.