

BIG BENEFITS FOR SINGAPORE

Country can leverage on Games, better facilities to build sports culture

* By TERRENCE VOON

SINGAPORE can reap the benefits of enhanced sporting venues, long after the Asian Youth Games (AYG) and the Youth Olympics (YOG) are staged here.

The upgrading of existing sports facilities will bring them closer to international standards - boosting the chances of hosting world-class events here.

Ordinary Singaporeans will also be able to enjoy the enhanced facilities, which include the brand-new running track at the Bishan Stadium and the upgraded diving platform at the Toa Payoh Swimming Complex.

Mr Teo Ser Luck, Senior Parliamentary Secretary (Community Development, Youth and Sports), made these points yesterday when the organising committee of the two events provided updates of their preparations.

"We don't want to organise the Games and then forget about them after that," he said. "They are not just another meeting or convention. They are multi-sports Games that hopefully we can leverage on to build a sports culture."

The Singapore Sports Council (SSC) is managing most of the venues for the AYG and YOG. Although the SSC did not want to reveal figures, it is estimated that the council will be spending up to seven times its usual upgrading budget per year to prepare its facilities for both events.

Some of the enhancements include boosting the lighting at the Bishan Stadium to meet international broadcast standards and upgrading the dressing rooms for athletes and the public toilets at the various venues.

The AYG, to be held between June 29 and July 7, will involve over 1,000 athletes competing in nine sports.

It is a key test event for the Youth Olympics, which will feature about 3,500 athletes and 26 sports next year.

Yesterday, the YOG organising committee revealed that the list of competition venues has been trimmed, from 19 to 18. Four new venues have been added, while five others have been dropped.

The new venues are: Jalan Besar Stadium (football), *scape Youth Park (3-on-3



Workers re-surfacing the running track at the Bishan Stadium, which will also get a new lighting system. ST PHOTO: JOYCE FANG

New YOG venues

FOOTBALL

Where: Jalan Besar Stadium

Replaces: Choa Chu Kang Stadium, Jurong West Stadium and Bishan Stadium

Why: Only six teams each will participate in the boys' and girls' events, so multiple venues are no longer necessary. The artificial turf at Jalan Besar can also stage several matches in one day without wear and tear.

3-ON-3 BASKETBALL

Where: *scape Youth Park

Replaces: Kallang Netball Centre

Why: The Orchard Road location is more hip and youth-oriented, and relieves some of the congestion around the Kallang area, which already hosts archery and tennis.

HOCKEY

Where: Sengkang Hockey Stadium

Replaces: Delta Sports Complex

Why: When completed, Sengkang will have two hockey pitches side by side, which fulfils international requirements. Delta has only one pitch.

ROAD CYCLING

Where: The Float@Marina Bay

Replaces: East Coast Park

Why: Having the start and end points on the floating platform will help showcase Singapore's skyline.

BEACH VOLLEYBALL

Sentosa is no longer needed as a venue, as the sport has been removed from the YOG line-up.

basketball), Sengkang Hockey Stadium (hockey) and The Float@Marina Bay (road cycling).

The Choa Chu Kang and Jurong West stadiums (football), Kallang Netball Centre (3-on-3 basketball), Delta Sports Complex (hockey) and Sentosa (beach volleyball) were taken off the initial list for various reasons.

A few sports have also swapped locations. Shooting will now be staged at the Singapore Sports School, while weightlifting and volleyball have been moved to the Toa Payoh Sports Hall (TPSH).

Table tennis, which was to be held at TPSH, will now take place at the Singapore Indoor Stadium.

According to SSC chief executive officer Oon Jin Teik, the upgrading works for all the venues are "on track".

"The improvements will ensure an enjoyable sporting experience for the athletes and the spectators at the Games and benefit the Singapore community in the long haul," he said.

tvoon@sph.com.sg