

# TIME FOR AN OLYMPIC BUZZ



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SPORTS fans love their stars, the promise of Bolt, Isinbayeva, Phelps and Federer starring in Singapore will be a surefire way to jog the imagination of the public as the country counts down to an Olympic event here.

It is a huge task to set pulses racing when unknown schoolchildren and teenagers are the ones that will take centre-stage in the sports arena.

Nevertheless, the muted atmosphere surrounding the inaugural Youth Olympic Games right now is surprising.

There are 142 days to the Games, to be held here from Aug 14 to 26. It is Singapore's biggest multi-sport event since the 1993 SEA Games and, with each passing day, there has been little to even stir some excitement among Singaporeans. For stadiums and sports halls to be filled during the Games with passionate Singaporeans, they need to be revved up early.

Obviously, the folk at the Singapore Youth Olympic Games Organising Com-

mittee (Syogoc) face many obstacles.

This is a brand new event, many here have no experience of such a Games, which will see around 3,600 athletes aged between 14 to 18 years doing battle in the 26 Olympic sports.

But I wonder why swimming star Tao Li cannot already get on TV and radio to deliver a message of support to our young athletes. Radojko Avramovic and his Lions can surely hit Orchard Road on a Saturday with Kadir Yahaya's Youth Olympic footballers to promote the Games, while our table tennis women can tour the heartlands with their Olympic silver medallists and the young paddlers and do the same.

I know many of our elite athletes are busy preparing for their own duels over the next few months, but the Youth Olympics will showcase Singapore to the world, surely we have to leave no stone uncovered to ensure it is a roaring success.

## LET'S GET THIS PARTY STARTED

Concerned over the lack of fuss over the upcoming Games, Minister for Community Development, Youth and Sports, Dr Vivian Balakrishnan recently asked for ideas from Singaporeans on how to get



Swim star Tao Li could help drum up support for Singapore's young athletes. AFP

the buzz going.

Last month, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) named American swimming superstar Michael Phelps and Chinese diving darling Guo Jingjing as ambassadors for the inaugural Youth Olympics. It will be a huge boost for the local publicity machine if the two stars, or even one of them, made an appear-

ance here. The easy charm of the world's greatest sprinter, Usain Bolt, would work like a dream, too.

Like so many other nations around the world, Singaporeans will be consumed by football once the World Cup finals roll around, there is every danger any attempt to drum up publicity during the tournament, which will run from June 11 to July 11, will be drowned out.

There is no time to waste.

Over the last few days, IOC president Jacques Rogge and 200 chefs-de-mission from the various National Olympic Committees have spent time in Singapore acquainting themselves with various Games' venues and have also been briefed on a number of operational procedures.

Rogge has urged the Olympic family to send their best young athletes to Singapore to ensure his brainchild resonates across the world.

The people of Singapore must embrace the Games, if we are to ensure Rogge hands out a glowing report card just before the flag is handed over to the city of Nanjing, the hosts of the second Youth Olympic Games in 2014.

We need to start to taste the excitement now.