We are ready...

One World, One Dream represents Beijing’s invitation for athletes and guests for the 2008 Olympics and all preparations have come to its final stage. With less than 100 days to go, voices in the capital hail the Summer Games with cheers, yet some are indifferent.

The completion of the National Stadium and the National Aquatics Centre, better known as the “Bird’s Nest” and the “Water Cube”, has given a green light for the August 8 opening ceremony of the Games of the XXIX (29th) Olympics. Yet the two landmarks are only a fraction of the pride of place.

Thirty-one competition venues in Beijing are mostly in gear for the 302 Olympics competitions held from August 8 to 24.

Some venues are situated in university campuses spread out in the city, including the Peking University Gymnasium, in which all table tennis competitions will take place; the Beijing University of Technology Gymnasium for badminton and rhythmic gymnastics; and also the China Agricultural University Gymnasium for wrestling.

The locations of these sports venues provide opportunities for university students to actively participate in the Olympics.

by William Chan and Amelia Loi
Zhou Hanlu, a postgraduate student reading Journalism and Communication at Peking University, works as a volunteer for media operations at the University Gymnasium. She said she was thrilled to be one of the volunteers for the Games. And she had already learnt much during the preparations, that she would not be able to learn from books.

She added that she had gone through many rounds of interviews and English training to become a volunteer. Her job for the Games includes writing press releases for both local and foreign media.

In order to make certain a smooth rundown for all events, the Beijing Organising Committee for the Games (BOCOG) recruited 76,000 volunteers for the Olympic Games and 30,000 for the Paralympics. Also a series of test-runs and competitions, named as Good Luck Beijing, were hosted at various Olympic venues to allow volunteers and staff to get familiarised with the procedures.

On March 23, Good Luck Beijing 2008 water polo China open final was hosted at the Yunding Natatorium. More than a thousand Beijing locals came to cheer for the Chinese team playing against the Australian team. The Australians won by 12 to 7 and claimed the men’s champion title.

Despite losing the game, the atmosphere at the spectator stand was heated. A man waving the Chinese national flag cheered loudly whenever the home team scored a goal. Among the crowd, Mr Choi, a Hong Kong accountant who works in Beijing, said he enjoyed the atmosphere and the game much.

Aside from the constructions of many sport venues, the infrastructure of Beijing has undergone rapid expansions. The transit rail network, the Beijing Subway, was initially 100 kilometres long. In order to provide adequate services for the influx of visitors during the Summer Games, the subway has expanded to 142 kilometres, with five lines in operation and 83 stations.

The subway expansion has made commuting more convenient for many, yet some taxi drivers are not as delighted as others. A taxi driver said he did not expect the Olympic Games to boost his income.

He said: “Most tourists travel by coach and now the subway covers more locations. Only very few people travel by taxi.” He expected that the Olympic Games in August would make it harder for him to make a living.

Mr Huang, a convenient store owner near “Bird’s Nest” the National Stadium said he did not expect the business to boom during the Summer Games. He added that most tourists would be driven directly to the stadium, and his customers were mainly locals from nearby offices.

Nonetheless, Mr Huang said the Olympic Games was a dream for all Chinese, “we should be proud for many generations from now that we have hosted the Olympics.”

The Games have brought changes to both the landscape of the capital, and more notably, to the way of living of its people.

“The Olympics is actually beneficial to Beijing citizens as it brings upon great improvement to the city’s development,” said Wang Hui, director of media relations for the BOCOG.

She added that the development did not confine only to the upgrade of the capital’s hardware, but also the improvement in quality of the lives of its people.

According to Miss Wang, the BOCOG initiated a series of campaigns to encourage Beijing’s citizens to give up some of their habits, in order to minimise cultural shock for some visitors from abroad.

“Nonetheless, he was now able to talk to foreigners in simple phrases, and understand straightforward directions in English.

A group of elderly at the Tiananmen Square gathered in the morning to practice tai-chi. They said they were all excited about the Summer Games. In English, they said, “We are ready.”