Youth Olympic Village on track for completion

Village mayor Teo Ser Luck will be ‘the face of S’pore’

By LEE U-WEN

DAILY housekeeping and laundry collection, High-speed Internet, Massage services. A movie theatre, pool tables and even a dance club.

These are just some of the many amenities that 5,000 of the world’s top young athletes will enjoy when they arrive in Singapore this August for the inaugural Youth Olympic Games (YOG). Home during their two-week stay here will be the Youth Olympic Village in Jurong, within the campus of the Nanyang Technological University.

Community Development, Youth and Sports Minister Vivian Balakrishnan told reporters after he toured the village that he was sure that the organising committee “made the right choice” in using NTU’s existing facilities to host the foreign athletes.

“It’s an established site, much larger than it would have been otherwise and this has made the construction much more convenient because it’s an already built-up site,” he said.

Back in 2008, the YOG organising committee dropped its original decision to build the village at the National University of Singapore’s new University Town campus because of escalating construction costs. The NTU site was listed as a back-up venue in Singapore’s YOG bid proposal to the International Olympic Committee.

“(The village) will come up to scratch very nicely,” said Dr Balakrishnan after he visited some of the hostel rooms and multi-purpose venues during his 30-minute guided tour. The village, which has a 5.6 kilometre perimeter, is about 80 per cent complete and the minister is confident that all the necessary works will be complete in a few weeks’ time.

The village mayor was also unveiled yesterday as none other than Teo Ser Luck, the man whom many largely credit with helping the Republic secure the hosting rights to the YOG, the largest sporting event ever to be staged here.

Mr Teo, who is the Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Community Development, Youth and Sports, will be “the face of Singapore to the athletes and officials”, said Dr Balakrishnan.

Mr Teo – an avid triathlete – will be assisted by two of Singapore’s most famous Olympians, swimmer Joscelin Yeo and track and field star C Kunalan.

The inaugural YOG, which is set to kick off in 67 days’ time with a grand opening ceremony at the Marina Bay Floating Platform on Aug 14, will see athletes aged between 14 and 18 taking part in all 26 Olympic sports.

“It is definitely all systems go. We are on track to give the athletes and officials from all around the world an unforgettable experience when they come to Singapore,” said Dr Balakrishnan.