Rogge eager to witness fun-filled YOG

BY CHIA HAN KEONG

LIKE a father expecting the birth of his first child, International Olympic Committee (IOC) president Jacques Rogge was an eager inspector of the Youth Olympic Games (YOG) venues around Singapore yesterday.

From morning till dusk, he chatted fervently with the participants of the Young Ambassador Programme, toured various YOG venues whose upgrading works are nearing completion, and even fielded a dialogue session with about 150 Singapore youths at the National Institute of Education.

Even with such a packed itinerary, the Belgian hardly showed any signs of tiredness. In fact, he answered queries regarding the YOG with a vitality and vim that belied his 67 years of age.

And why not? After all, he is the man who helped devise the concept of a YOG way back in 1991.

With his dream of a youth-level global sports competition about to come to fruition when the YOG opens in Singapore on Aug 14, it is no wonder that he is excited about the occasion.

“I’m excited about a lot of things about the YOG,” he said. “Singapore has come up with a very well-organised philosophy of how to educate and train young people according to the Olympic values.”

Indeed, he emphasised the value of fun for the athletes at the YOG, which will be held from Aug 14-26 in Singapore, and hopes that they will participate in the Cultural and Education Programme of the Games, even in the midst of their competitions.

He said: “It must be fun; it cannot be too serious. The athletes are between 14 and 18 years old and that is the age to celebrate, not necessarily the age to achieve.

“For me, the measurement of success lies in the happiness of the athlete. If the athletes are happy, then, for me, the experience is a success.”

Rogge, who competed in the yachting event in three consecutive Olympic Games from 1968, believes that the YOG can be a magnet, a force which can motivate youngsters to carry on with sports after they reach adulthood.

“I would think that the event, in time, will be a magnet for young people who want to participate in something like that,” he said.

Rogge added: “We can see the ‘magnet effect’ of the traditional Games. I think we will have the same effect for the YOG, too.”

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