Athletes can escape the heat of competition and rest, relax and have fun at the NTU facility

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SINGAPORE – Around 3,600 athletes and over 1,000 officials will stay at the Youth Olympic Village.

The 55-hectare facility at the Nanyang Technological University (NTU) officially opens at 10am today, as Singapore gears up to host the inaugural Youth Olympic Games, which will be held here from Aug 14 to 26.

The first thing to greet the athletes and officials when the shuttle buses stop at the Welcome Centre will be two neat rows of luggage trolleys.

Guests can expect a speedy check-in as Games volunteers and staff validate their accreditation passes at the centre.

Each athlete and key officials will also receive their Samsung mobile phone, which will be loaded with digital concierge services such as training and competition schedules, transport information and a multi-lingual dictionary.

Games Village director Sheryl Lim, along with a workforce of more than 2,000 will ensure the athletes and officials are comfortable and their daily needs met from now till Aug 28.

“Our key performance indicator is for them to spend a maximum of 10 minutes at the Welcome Centre. The main thing is for them to quickly move to the residential halls as some of them have been on long flights to get here,” Lim told MediaCorp yesterday.

“We are already operational, all the facilities are open and the volunteers are ready and fully trained. We’re just waiting for the athletes to come in.”

Divided into two zones – residential zone and village square – the Games Village houses 10 residential halls which includes a resident centre with a 24-hour front desk, wireless Internet hot spots, clinic and laundry services.

Athletes can mingle with friends at the square’s world culture village, where they can enjoy daily musical performances and concerts and view exhibition booths from all 205 National Olympic Committees (NOCs).

A gym, dance club and movie theatre are also housed in the facility, and athletes will be able to enjoy game consoles and board games to rest and relax.

Girls’ football teams Turkey and Iran and Chile and Trinidad & Tobago kick off their preliminary matches at Jalan Besar Stadium on Thursday, with the boys’ competition (Vanuatu vs Bolivia, Singapore vs Zimbabwe) to follow a day later.

According to Lim, a number of the football teams have checked into the village.

One of them is Trinidad & Tobago’s 18-member girls’ football team, who arrived in Singapore last Thursday. They checked into the village on Sunday and team manager Venetta Flanders and Young Ambassador Kwanize John were spotted making their way around the facility yesterday.

Kwanize, 21, is one of 30 ambassadors nominated by their NOC to promote the Games in their communities and help facilitate the culture and education activities at the village.

The undergraduate at the University of Trinidad and Tobago gave the Games Village the thumbs up, when she said: “The people here are very warm; the volunteers know what they are doing and are very helpful. I’m most definitely looking forward to the opening ceremony at the Marina Bay.”

“Everything was cool and the volunteers really made the transition smooth. The residential halls are very nice, very comfortable and spacious,” added Flanders.

Lim expects the biggest challenges to come from food and housekeeping and according to her, daily meetings with the 205 chefs-de-mission will be held at the Games Village to iron out any issues over the two areas, or transport and security, for example.

With so many important “guests” at the Games Village, security measures have been tightened at the campus, with a 24-hour guard patrol and perimeter fencing.