

Beijing 2008 – More than just a sporting event

By Prasong Uthaisangchai

Senior Executive Vice President and Director of International Banking Group, Bangkok Bank

A discussion focusing on business opportunities in China will often turn to the 2008 summer Olympic Games, which will officially open on August 8, 2008, in Beijing. These 'great' and 'green' games of the 29th Olympiad are a treasure trove of opportunities for business, as stadiums have to be built, athletes housed and thousands of spectators accommodated. The news from our branch in Beijing is that the buzz about the games is growing louder by the day.

Less loudly trumpeted, yet also significant, is the 2010 World Expo being held in Shanghai. Themed 'Better City, Better Life', it is estimated that 70 million people will visit the Expo over its 184 days.

These two events are providing China with significant catalysts for change and will ensure that, regardless of economic progress, the world's gaze will remain firmly on the East during the next few years.

The Chinese are capitalizing on the fact that both these events will provide opportunities for greater foreign participation. The flow-on impact will be to increase the pace of reform and rising standards of living.

The Chinese government is spending billions of dollars investing in both Beijing and Shanghai with much of the money to be spent on construction of facilities, transportation, telecommunications and environmental improvements. Further opportunities abound in the areas of tourism, marketing, advertising and exhibition services.

These projects provide excellent insight into how the Chinese business mind operates – with an all encompassing holistic view, and a meticulous attention to detail.

The Olympics alone is a truly massive undertaking. For example, Beijing will need 37 competition venues and 76 training venues. Shanghai will also undertake large-scale development to create a new and innovative venue for the Shanghai World Expo in 2010.

As everyone knows - the answer to the question "how do you eat an elephant?" is "one bite at a time" and China's meticulous attention to detail is to be admired.

The Beijing Olympic Games Organizing Committee (BOCOG) consists of many departments, looking after everything from venue planning to environmental management, and will gradually expand to meet increasing demands. It has been reported that by 2008, there will be more than 30 departments and 4,000 staff under the BOCOG umbrella. There is even an Office for the Solicitation and Selection of Theme Songs for the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games.

The attention to detail also extends to ensuring that the Feng Shui will be auspicious. The date chosen for the opening of the Olympic Games – 08/08/08 is a smooth, rounded, auspicious number associated with potential and growth.

The games provide us with an example of the famed Chinese work ethic and endurance, and their ability to move with lightening speed when required while still maintaining their attention to detail.

There is no doubt that both the Beijing Olympics and the Shanghai World Expo will support Chinese economic and social development. They will also ensure our attention remains firmly on China for some time to come. Observe the action closely and you can learn a lot about how the Chinese operate in the world of business.

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