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HEATING UP

PHOTO BY LUKE MACGREGOR / REUTERS

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon is all smiles as he carries the Olympic flame ahead of the Olympic Games in London on Thursday.

MAYOR SAYS LONDON IS READY

Seven years of work are finally paying off and Johnson says he's not worried about Games

By CECILY LIU and ZHANG CHUNYAN in London



London hopes to deliver an "understated but confident" Olympic Games, Mayor Boris Johnson told China Daily one day before the opening ceremony.

Johnson, who received celebrity treatment in China four years ago when he accepted the Olympic flag from Beijing, said London is ready for the big show.

"I have fond memories of our time in Beijing. Our intention is to try to match Beijing but in our own different way. Understated but confident, that's what we're going to do," he said.

About four billion TV viewers worldwide are expected to watch the opening ceremony on Friday.

Nearly 10,500 athletes from 204 countries and regions will take part in the Games, which run until Aug 12.

London also wants to showcase the best of the city, and attract more attention and investment.

Johnson held a roundtable discussion on Wednesday with a group of leading Chinese entrepreneurs, including Liu Chuanzhi, chairman of Legend Holdings, and Zhu Xinli, chairman of Huiyuan Juice Group, in an attempt to woo investors.

"They're looking for opportunities in London, and they're already investing heavily in our city, I'm proud to say," Johnson said. "So one of the things we are hoping to do in this Olympic period is to build on the friendship between London and Beijing."

The Chinese entrepreneurs, who also met Britain's Prime Minister David Cameron, are part of the 4,000 business leaders London is hosting during the Olympics.

With problems in the eurozone countries, and the global economic downturn, Johnson hailed London as

They're looking for opportunities in London, and they're already investing heavily in our city, I'm proud to say."

BORIS JOHNSON
LONDON MAYOR, ON
CHINESE ENTREPRENEURS

"a very good safe place for investment for long-term returns."

London's preparations for the Games attracted criticism, especially as the city's 44 million pound (\$69 million) cable cars experienced problems on Wednesday, leaving visitors suspended about 90 meters over the Thames River for nearly 40 minutes.

Johnson emphasized that London is as ready as "any city has ever been in this stage of preparations." "Obviously I'm cautiously aware of where we are. Today we've had a good day on the networks," he said.

London won the Olympic bid in 2005. Since then, the city has built three permanent sports venues — the Olympic Stadium, the Aquatics Centre and a velodrome. Some temporary venues have also been established in iconic places like Greenwich Park, Hyde Park and Horse Guards Parade.

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You can love the game and still love another person

By CHEN XIANGFENG in London
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Even at the Olympics, some of the best stories are love stories.

Though Chinese athletes are generally discouraged from dating teammates or fellow athletes, an increasing number have made their relationships public — and the establishment seems to be OK with that.

Front and center this time around are badminton mixed doubles world champions Zhang Nan and Zhao Yunlei, whose relationship was brought to light when they hugged and kissed after winning the Japan Super Series two years ago.

They have since taken over the world No 1 ranking, and last year become China's first known couple to win a world title together.

There's something about high-level badminton that seems to spark romance.

From Yang Yang and Zheng Yuli in the 1980s to Lin Dan and Xie Xingfang during the Beijing Olympic Games, a number of high-profile lovers have left their marks.

While Xie retired after the Beijing Games, Zhang and Zhao are playing together in London in the hope of becoming the nation's first Olympic gold medal couple.

Compared with other Chinese coaches, badminton's Li

Yongbo is lenient on the subject. "I am actually not opposed to relationships between teammates," Li said during a recent interview with Xinhua News Agency. "It's a good thing, to some extent, because lovebirds can cheer for each other. It's the players' form that matters, after all. The pairs won't harm society and might improve their skills. So why interfere?"

Li has been there himself. He met his wife, rhythmic gymnast Xie Ying, at a training venue in 1983.

"We were very young when we fell in love, my wife and I," he said. "What we talked about most of the time is, 'I'll get the

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LEON NEAL / AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Zhao Yunlei (left) and Zhang Nan of China celebrate after defeating Chris Adcock of England and Imogen Bankier of Scotland during the mixed doubles finals of the World Badminton Championships at Wembley Arena in London on Aug 14, 2011. They became China's first known couple to win a world title together.

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