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MAGIC IN THE AIR

Gymnasts deliver
spectacular airborne
action in trampoline final

Uzbekistan's Mirshokhid Khasanboev performs in the Asian Games men's trampoline gymnastics final at Huanglong Sports Centre Gymnasium on Tuesday. Khasanboev eventually finished fourth, with China's Yan Langyu claiming gold ahead of Kazakhstan's Danil Mussabayev (silver) and Hiroto Yamada of Japan (bronze). REUTERS



Singapore's Veronica Shanti Pereira in action during the women's 200m final at the Asian Games on Monday. WEI XIAOHAO / CHINA DAILY

Singaporean sprinter, who quit her day job to compete, ends nation's five-decade wait for Asiad athletics gold

By **WANG XIN** in Hangzhou
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Singaporean sprinter Veronica Shanti Pereira quit her job as a copywriter this year to become a full-time athlete.

It proved to be the right decision, as she claimed the women's 200m gold at the Hangzhou Olympic Sports Centre Stadium on Monday, ending Singapore's 49-year wait for an athletics gold medal at the Asiad.

Before her, Swee Lee Chee was the last Singaporean to stand on the top podium at an Asian Games, winning the title in the women's 400m in 1974.

Despite the drama and tension caused by a false start, Pereira has managed to stay focused all the way and clocked 23.03 seconds in the final, crossing ahead of China's Li Yuting (23.28 sec) and defending champion Edidiong Ofonime Odiong of Bahrain (23.48 sec).

"When I was at the blocks, I was just thinking 'execute, execute, execute' for every aspect of my race. When I got off the blocks, I was trying to execute my bend. I do some cuts every now and then, so I was trying to focus on that," said Pereira.

"The thing about the 200m is that there are going to be people in front

of you, and I was just focused on taking the curve and coming into the straight as strong as possible. Once I saw I was in the straight, I said 'just go, just go for the finish,' she added.

After the race, when Pereira finally came to understand what had happened, she was overwhelmed by emotion and could hardly hold back her tears.

"I just saw the finish line, I knew I crossed the line first, and I was like 'oh my god, what a season, what a season.' I just saw the finish line, I knew I won. It's been so crazy. It means a lot to me. I can't really describe this. It's been incredible," she said, choking up in her post-race interviews.

"Before the race, I said, 'I'm going to give it everything I've got, because it's my last race of the season. I'm going to make it count,'" she added.

This was the 27-year-old's second medal in the continental sporting jamboree. Two days earlier, on Sept 30, she claimed silver in the 100m with a time of 11.27.

"I never expected this (winning both medals). I wanted to do this, I loved doing this, but I never thought it was possible. To be here, it's amazing."

Taking part in the sport since primary school, Pereira first burst onto the scene at the 2015 South East



Asian Games in Singapore, where she won the women's 200m. Her older sisters Valerie and Shobi even wrote a children's book called *Go Shanti Go!* about her time at the Games, which has inspired many kids in the nation.

However, she has endured a challenging journey since, not even making the finals of the women's 100m or 200m at the past two editions of Asian Games, as well as the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

Now, looking back at her decision to ditch her writing job, she feels no regrets, but is thankful for the experience. She added that she respects her

competitors, but has more expectations for the future.

"When I was working and training at the same time, it was a bit difficult to find time for recovery. It was hard to maintain a certain level of quality for all of my sessions, as there are some days when I just can't help being tired.

"Being an athlete is a 24/7, 365-day job, so there are a lot of things that come into play outside of the actual training sessions, like how I'm mentally preparing, my food, my sleep and how I recover," she explained.

"When I had the chance (to make a career switch), I jumped right in. I'm making this a career for as long as possible. I have a lot of respect for everyone out here. We're all on this incredible journey, racing and finding ourselves," she said.

Pereira's historic achievements have won extensive plaudits, especially back home. Both Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and President Tharman Shanmugaratnam have sent their congratulations via social media.

President Tharman wrote in a Facebook post: "Shanti shows what we can achieve. With personal guts and determination. First class coaches. Strong and patient support from our national bodies. And a population cheering for our sportspeople."



Volunteers earn deserved plaudits

By **HE QI** in Hangzhou
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Helping to find coins for a game, celebrating birthdays for journalists — the volunteers at the Asian Games often go above and beyond the call of duty.

As of Tuesday, volunteers at the Asiad had collectively served nearly 37,800 people over 3.36 million hours. It's little wonder then that they have earned resounding praise from international media, event organizers, and athletes. Indeed, the volunteers have received coverage in over 500 news reports.

The nickname of the volunteers is *xiao qinghe*, which translates as 'little lotuses,' the same name as the volunteers of the G20 Hangzhou Summit.

"The name was inspired by Song dynasty poet Yang Wanli, describing the scenery of the West Lake of Hangzhou," said Wang Jie, executive director-in-charge of the Human Resources Operations Centre of the Hangzhou Asian Games and director of the Volunteers Department of the Hangzhou Asian Games Organizing Committee (HAGOC).

Wang explained that some volunteers started work as early as Aug 8, and, among them, the mascot volunteers need to wear performance clothing exceeding five kilograms in weight every day.

"It can get pretty hot and stuffy in those costumes, so interacting with visitors and journalists can be hard work," Wang said.

Before the Asiad, the HAGOC carefully selected and trained volunteers to primarily serve 56 competition venues, 20 training venues, and 22 specialized business units in 13 areas.

"We conducted a rigorous training process and selected the best 37,600 candidates, out of 317,000 applicants, specializing in languages, competition, hospitality, protocol services and more," Wang said.

"We cooperated with various universities, where most of these volunteers come from, to ensure the necessary support and well-being of the volunteers," he added.

Wang Ling, a student from Zhejiang Sci-Tech University, is a volunteer at Hangzhou Olympic Sports Centre Stadium. She was initially responsible for distributing volunteer support materials and was assigned to spectator services at the opening ceremony, before taking care of the catering services during competitions.

"I had to memorize the logos, flow lines and the seating areas, and be prepared for questions from spectators, while remaining patient and meticulous," Wang said.

Taking the good with the kabaddi

Local fans fall in love with ancient Indian sport as it finds new audience at Hangzhou Asiad

By SUN XIAOCHEN in Hangzhou
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A team sport that's fun to watch and easy to get involved with, kabaddi is gaining traction at the 19th Asian Games with the top contenders dedicated to lifting the regional sport to global prominence.

At first glance, it looks like the chase-and-catch game of tag, yet at certain points also resembles a hybrid of dodgeball and wrestling, with the constant rotation of a lone "raider" taking on several defenders leaving spectators enthralled.

This is kabbadi, a game which, according to folklore, originated 4,000 years ago in the Tamil Nadu region of India, and has since evolved into a continental sporting phenomenon, as well as a symbol of cultural diversity at the Asian Games.

The contact sport involves two teams, each starting with seven players, taking individual turns to raid the opposing side's court on a rectangular mat. An attacker scores when he or she tags a defender on any part of the body in one raid and returns to his own half safely. At all times, until they return safely to their side of the court, the raider must repeatedly and constantly chant "kabaddi! kabaddi!" without stopping, which is where the name of the sport originates.

The defending team can also score by joining forces to trap and stop the raider.

Kabaddi kicked off its six-day program in Hangzhou on Monday with nine men's teams competing in matches lasting 40 minutes, and seven teams in the women's tournament, which plays 30-minute games.

Kabaddi and cricket are the only two sports that Team China did not qualify any teams for at the Hangzhou Asiad.

To the surprise of athletes and coaches, though, the Chinese crowd's instant appreciation of the sport, highlighted by the "oohs" and "aahs" greeting each successful raid and tackle at the Xiaoshan Guali Sports Centre, has grown their confidence to expand the game to a global stage.

"Being here in China is a good opportunity for kabaddi to be promoted. If children start playing this sport at school level, then in univer-



Above: A "raider" from Thailand's men's kabaddi team is repelled by the defenders of Chinese Taipei.

Below: Bangladesh's "raider" gets sent packing by the Nepal women's team. PHOTOS BY ZHANG WEI / CHINA DAILY

sities, it could become really popular," said Iran head coach Gholamreza Mazandarani after leading his team in a 43-16 rout over Pakistan in their men's Group B opener on Monday.

"China has the population, this is very easy and it can be played in schools, or everywhere in a park. China can start it easily and then improve its team," the former Iran national team captain said of the host nation's potential.

Representing a surging force in a sport long dominated by its birth country, Mazandarani for sure knows a thing or two in helping develop kabaddi in untapped markets.

Guided by the former wrestler-judoka-turned-kabaddi instructor, the Iranian men's squad wrested the gold from India's grasp at the 2018 Asian Games in Indonesia, snapping India's 28-year winning streak at the continental sporting gala.

"If we make some new leagues or competitions available, more countries can join in. Kabaddi then grows more popular and we have a better chance to get it into the Olympics,"



said Mazandarani, who also coaches India-based Pro Kabaddi League franchise, U Mumba.

Kabaddi's connection with the Olympics can be traced a long way back. Before the 1936 Olympics in Berlin, it was performed as part of a pre-Games show, which won over

spectators in the German capital for the sheer strength, guile and agility it demonstrated.

After twice featuring at the Asian Games in 1951 and 1982 as a demonstration event, kabaddi's popularity soared by leaps and bounds across the sub-continent, before eventually

making it to the Asian Games program as a medal event in 1990.

Now with a pro league taking talent development and marketing to another level, kabaddi has developed a legitimate Olympic aspiration that many consider promising.

"I think kabaddi is a very interesting sport for a lot of people, because it is a contact sport," said Iranian team captain Fazel Atrachali, a formidable member of the 2018 Asiad-winning squad.

"The sport has been making progress, there are professional leagues like the one in India. If we work harder, and if European and African countries also join us, kabaddi can be in the Olympics one day."

Women's participation has also been on the rise since the female version was included in the Asiad program at Guangzhou 2010. India won the first two editions before their dominance was ended by Iran's women's squad in 2018.

The much-improved performance of contenders from developing kabaddi regions, such as Chinese Taipei, has underlined the sport's expansion potential.

Chinese Taipei, a bronze medal-winning team in the women's tournament in 2018, forced a 34-point tied game on Monday against their mighty group opponent India, winner of the inaugural women's tournament and enforcer of Chinese Taipei's 62-18 debut loss in 2010.

"It has started to attract more participants from the schools, but it's still quite a niche sport," said Chinese Taipei women's team captain Chuang Ya-han.

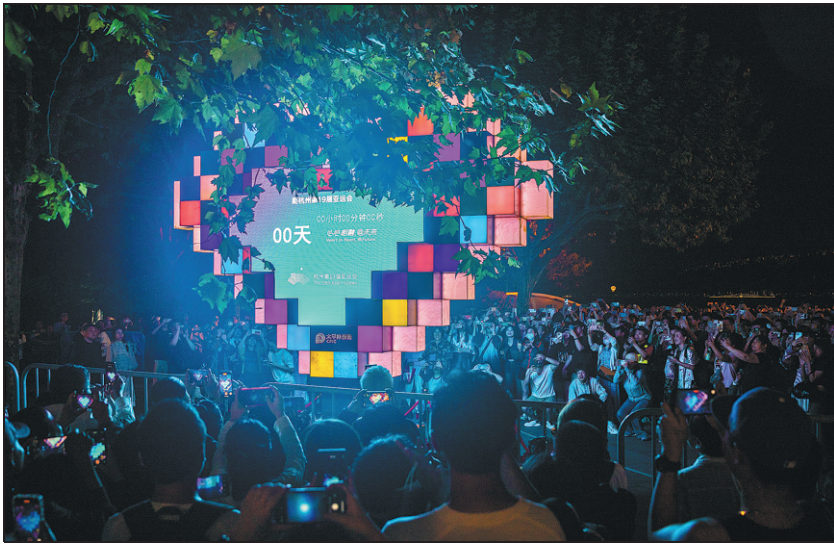
"We have an annual championship system that involves four age groups and 500 players, mostly high-school and college students, as the foundation. Yet it was still not enough.

"I hope (by competing well at the Asiad) we can get more attention from broadcasters and sponsors for the sport," said Chuang, a former track and field athlete.

To help bring the level of its national program up to continental contention, Thailand hired experienced Indian coach Ravi Shetty to lead the women's team at the Asiad.

"We are spreading the sport. Here, nobody in particular wins, no countries. The real winner is kabaddi," said Shetty, the mastermind behind U Mumba's 2015 PKL championship team.

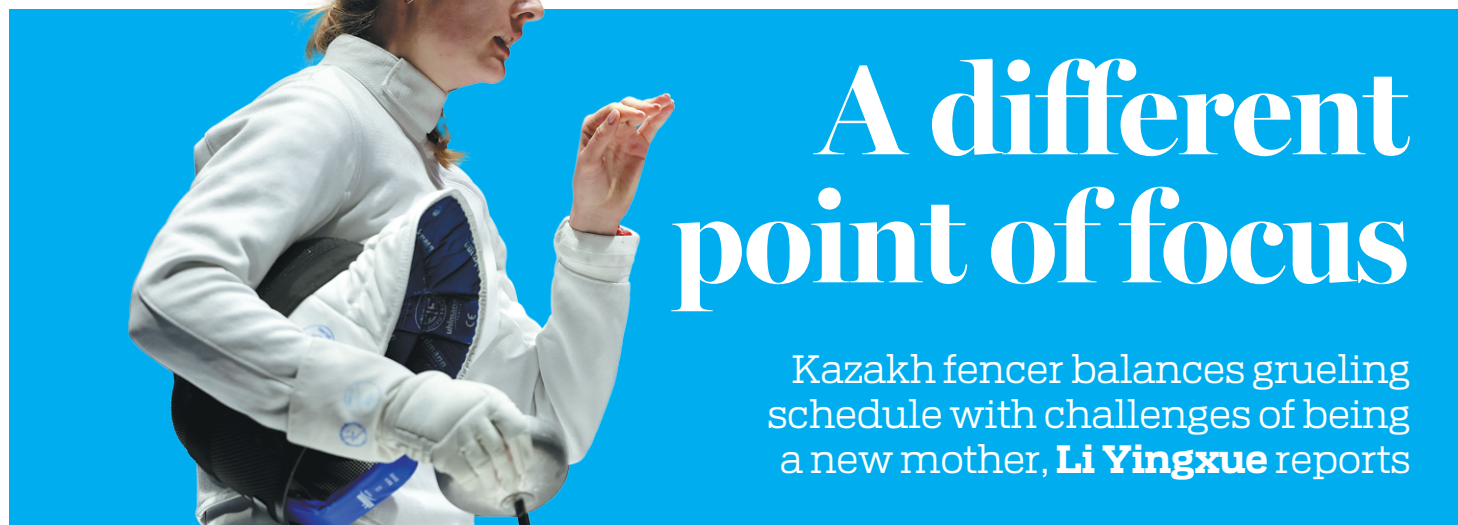
"People in Thailand are very interested in kabaddi. We have been getting a lot of support. This allows us to have the best talent from the entire country, and now there is a lot more work being done at grassroots level as well."



Complementing the world-class action on the sports field, the Hangzhou Asian Games have served up a veritable feast of culture, with a plethora of performances and interactive activities keeping visitors entertained throughout the 19th Asiad. The local heritage of Zhejiang province has taken pride of place in this showcase, with traditional Chinese culture presented in an engaging, modern and fun way for people to experience. HU JIANHUAN AND HU JIANQIANG / FOR CHINA DAILY AND WANG GANG AND QIAN CHENFEI / CHINA NEWS SERVICE



A packed program of cultural events has created a festival atmosphere in Hangzhou and its five co-host cities in Zhejiang province during the 19th Asian Games, harmoniously blending the rich local tradition and heritage with Hangzhou's modern image as a hub for innovation and technology. YANG YUJIA / FOR CHINA DAILY AND YIN LIQIN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE



A different point of focus

Kazakh fencer balances grueling schedule with challenges of being a new mother, **Li Yingxue** reports

Standing on the fencing piste at the Hangzhou Dianzi University Gymnasium, Ulyana Pistsova from Kazakhstan, at 1.81 meters tall, was cold and ruthless.

However, the second she concluded her match and removed her mask, her eyes transformed from steely determination to a gentle gaze as she looked for one special spectator in the stands — her one-year-old daughter.

Despite Pistsova's impressive victory in all three of her individual battles against Chinese fencers, Kazakhstan suffered a 39-45 defeat to China in the women's epee team quarterfinal at the 19th Asian Games in Hangzhou.

Three days earlier, she was also a step away from the podium — she was beaten 7-15 by Choi In-jeong of the Republic of Korea in the women's epee individual quarterfinal and ranked fifth.

Perhaps for the 30-year-old, the bright smile of her daughter serves as the most heartening source of comfort.

"The Korean girl is stronger," she said. Before coming to Hangzhou, Pistsova was aiming for a medal. "But my thinking has changed. I am so thankful to be here and to everyone who helped me," she said, holding her baby in her arms.

Over the past year, she has seamlessly transitioned between her roles as a fencer and a new mother. She has managed to regain her mental and physical readiness for competitions, while also learning to excel as a devoted parent. As she gradually finds her rhythm, she continues to grow in both aspects of her life.

It has taken some work, though.

Born in 1993, Pistsova began her journey in modern pentathlon at the tender age of five. However, when she turned 17, she made a pivotal decision to shift her focus from five sports to just one — fencing.

She steadily emerged as a prominent figure on Kazakhstan's fencing scene, participating in numerous World Cups and World Championships. At the 2014 Incheon Asian Games, she achieved a fifth-place finish in the women's epee team event.

Last September, she welcomed the birth of her baby girl and, for over a year, she temporarily hung up her sword. However, just 40 days later, Pistsova began training at home, and three months later, she made her return to competition by participating in the Kazakhstan Cup, finishing fourth.

Taking care of the baby alone most of the time, Pistsova cherishes her practice and com-



Kazakh fencer, Ulyana Pistsova, takes her one-year-old for a walk in the Games Village. PHOTOS BY WEI XIAOHAO / CHINA DAILY

petition time as a welcome break from the hard work of parenting. However, she explained she often has to bring her daughter with her to tournaments.

"Our parents are old, and they couldn't look after her, and we don't have a babysitter," she said. "It has been hard."

Her husband is the head coach of the Kazakhstan fencing team. He and some of Pistsova's teammates help take care of the baby when they travel to compete. "Fencing is not easy, there are many trips, including planes, trains and buses. Without him, this is impossible," she said.

The experience of raising a child helped Pistsova to be mentally stronger on the piste than before she was pregnant, and she didn't need to train as much as she did before.

"When you give birth to a child, only at that time a woman can understand how powerful she is," she said. "Now I am understanding that fencing is so much about thinking."

Pistsova said both she and her husband have agreed that, when she's old enough, they will let their little daughter decide if she wants to practice fencing and won't force her.

The Hangzhou Asian Games Village has hosted Pistsova and her baby well during their stay. "It's quite a clean place and the city is clean. There are very good apartments here."

Hangzhou has witnessed a big step in the family's development, literally. During her time in the village, the little girl has started walking more steadily.

"At home, she could only walk at most three steps, but here she started walking," she said. "There are so many places she can walk inside the village and there is a wide choice of food. She likes the steamed buns."

Pistsova has also taken the baby on a tour on one of the autonomously driven VR buses in the village. "That's very high-tech," she said.

Pistsova said she will maintain training, but is not sure if she will take part in qualification for next year's Olympics in Paris. With only the winner earning a spot at the Games, the competition is intense.

"I don't want her to feel the stress that I will carry," she said. "My daughter comes first in my life, fencing is second now."

Water polo women hope to make a splash in Paris

By **HE QI** in Hangzhou
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Experiencing ups and downs, the Chinese women's water polo team gets another chance to prove their potential on a global stage in the traditionally European-dominated sport.

On National Day, Team China put the water polo world on notice by producing a dominant display to defeat Japan and secure its fourth consecutive Asian Games title at Huanglong Sports Centre.

As well as a gift for the motherland, the triumph also booked the team's ticket to the Paris Olympics next year.

"The Asian Games is the most important tournament of the year for us, and this win got us our ticket to Paris, so we are especially happy," said Lu Yiwen, who played driver position in the game.

"I'm thankful to my parents. My folks have been watching me. Today is National Day, this is the best birthday gift we can give to our country, wishing it prosperity and that it gets better and

better," Lu added.

Theocharis Pavlidis, China's head coach, also praised the team: "The performance was amazing; I am very proud of my team. The girls showed their spirit, they played for their country and for everyone in this team."

"For two years we have worked hard for this match. We have booked our ticket to Paris which is very important. We beat Japan by a clear margin," Pavlidis added.

Unlike most competitions, this niche event saw an introduction video played to the audience before the final started, since many of them were new to the sport.

The unfamiliarity is, in part, due to China's relatively late start in women's water polo, which was established in 2004, and which has endured many ups and downs over the past two decades.

At the bottom of two consecutive World Cups following the establishment of the team, the youngsters achieved a fifth-place finish at the 2008 Beijing Olympics, receiving a lot of attention as a result.

A bronze medal at the 2010 World Cup, fol-

lowed by a runner-up slot at the World Championship in 2011 and then victory at the 2013 FINA World Championships, illustrated the team's gradual progress.

Before securing its fourth consecutive Asiad gold in Hangzhou, the Chinese women's water polo team came off a six-game losing streak at the 2023 Water Polo World Cup in Long Beach, California, United States.

The trip to Paris seems like an enormous challenge.

"At the Olympics, we will have to play against European teams and the USA, who are at a better level than China at the moment," Pavlidis said.

"We must develop our defensive skills, we are a team that defends a lot, so we must improve."

"We need to become a team that believes we can beat anyone. It is not easy when you have lost against these teams over the last eight years."

"We need time and we need lots of games against the best teams in the world. Our players must get experience," he added.

Xiong Dunhan, a member of the gold medal-



China's women's water polo team booked its place at the 2024 Paris Olympics by winning gold in Hangzhou. DU YANG / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

winning team, described the Olympics as an unfulfilled dream.

"We didn't achieve what we wanted at the last Olympics (in Tokyo). We are looking forward to the day when the China women's water polo team can stand on the podium at the Olympics. It is this kind of belief that has shaped me into who I am today," she said.

"The crowd was especially enthusiastic. This is something we don't see often at national tournaments. I hope more people will support the sport as a result of this enthusiasm and passion, and see the appeal of water polo," said Xiong.

A culture brimming with vitality

From delicate designs to dragon dancing, Zhejiang province shows its colorful heritage, **Xu Haoyu** reports

To further promote the integration of traditional intangible cultural heritage into modern life, on the eve of, and throughout, the Asian Games, organizations from various regions have engaged in the study and presentation of traditional culture.

Last month, students from Hangzhou Vocational and Technical College visited Xiangshan county in Ningbo, Zhejiang province, to learn about the local intangible cultural heritage together with villagers. Their visit saw them witness first-hand woodblock printing techniques and Fuyang oilpaper umbrella craftsmanship, among other skills.

One particular aspect of Zhejiang culture, Baiyelong dance, made an immediate impression on hundreds of millions of TV viewers at the Asian Games' opening ceremony.

Back in July, the Changxing Baiyelong dance troupe was informed that Baiyelong dance had been selected as a warm-up performance for the ceremony. Baiyelong, which literally means "a dragon made of 100 lotus leaves", was inspired by a local legend about a dragon born in a lotus pond. During approximately two months of rehearsals, the troupe continuously refined the program to set higher requirements for everyone's positioning synchronization and connection.

Zhejiang's culture is rooted in both intricacy and vitality. Take for example the assembly process of the oilpaper umbrella's frame.

Connecting the umbrella ribs, handle and top requires processes such as splicing and threading. These steps, which seemed incredibly easy in the hands of Wen Shishan, a representative inheritor of the Zhejiang provincial-level intangible cultural heritage technique, are actually quite challenging for beginners.

Each step requires the utmost patience and attention to detail.

Although the process was tough and time-consuming, the sense of excitement was palpable among both villagers and students when they saw the beautiful oilpaper umbrellas gradually coming together in their own hands.

Through this umbrella-making



Top: Baiyelong dance made an immediate impression on TV viewers at the Asian Games' opening ceremony in Hangzhou.
YI FAN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Above: The Changxing Baiyelong dance troupe practices for the opening ceremony.
WU ZHENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

experience, people gained a deeper and more genuine appreciation for the dedication and perseverance embodied in the craftsman's spirit.

Lincheng town in Huzhou city, Zhejiang, has also brought intangible cultural heritage, such as the Baiyelong dance, lion dance, Longshan dry boat and paired wrestling to villages.

"As the Asian Games start, we are organizing a variety of practices and activities to showcase the beautiful life, civilized customs and cultural charm of Lincheng," says Bai Lin, an official of Lincheng town. "Through these activities, we aim to subtly guide everyone to understand the Games and present our culture, thus contributing to the welcoming of the Asian Games."

"Next, we will continue to mobilize people to foster a strong atmosphere of love, support and participation in the Asian Games, showcasing cultural confidence, conveying the warmth of Lincheng and, together, add more color to the Asian Games!"

In addition to intangible cultural heritage experiences and learning activities organized spontaneously by the public, some specific performances are being showcased during

the Asian Games and the Baiyelong dance is a highlight.

This traditional folk custom activity in Changxing county in Huzhou was selected as a provincial-level intangible cultural heritage in May 2005.

Unlike the props used in traditional Chinese dragon dances, which are normally covered by cloth of gold and red, the body in the Baiyelong dance is composed of hundreds of pink lotus petals.

The formation and development of the dance marks a notable variant in the evolution of lantern crafts. It has incorporated modern lantern-making techniques that use wire and spun silk as materials. The dragon's body is made of dozens of bamboo rings adorned with lotus petals. Ropes connect the rings, allowing them to be folded or extended.

When stacked, they resemble a series of large lotus flowers; when extended, they form a colorful dragon with petals serving as dragon scales, appearing almost lifelike.

These skyward-reaching dragons, surrounded by the vibrant green of lotus leaves that resemble magnificent clouds, roll and dive; at times, they soar courageously, revealing fearless strength, and sometimes,

they twist and twine gracefully, expressing a sense of emotion and sentiment, providing an overwhelming artistic visual delight to the viewer.

The art troupe adjusted the original performance format from the dancing of four dragons to the connection between two.

Through the perspective of a group of backpackers who travel to Huzhou, it showcased scenes of rippling lake water, swaying lotus leaves, fluttering colorful butterflies, lotus flowers transforming into dragons, and dragons turning back into lotus flowers.

"Since only two dragons are used in this performance, and they need to coordinate with each other, we strive for perfection in our positioning, aiming to best present the art of Baiyelong dance," said performer Gu Yue.

"We hope that this dance, which has been performed in Changxing for over 200 years, can be presented to the whole world in a brand-new way on the stage of the Asian Games," said Gu Keni, the general director of the program.

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Keeping a well-crafted promise

Inheritor's fulfilled pledge to rowers highlights the Cultural House's mission

By LI YINGXUE in Hangzhou
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Lu Shiyu and her teammate Shen Shuangmei had, for many months, hoped to win the women's double sculls championship at the Hangzhou Games — but only for a couple of weeks had they likewise wished to get a fish woven from palm fibers.

And they took both home after their victory at the Fuyang Water Sports Centre on Sept 24.

"You performed brilliantly and claimed the championship with ease," said Wang Li, an officially recognized cultural heritage inheritor of palm-fiber weaving, as he handed Lu the figurine after their win.

"So, I hereby fulfill my promise and present to you this meticulously crafted palm-fiber fish."

This pledge was made half a month ago, when the duo wandered into the Games Village's Cultural House, where Wang taught them how to

weave palm fibers.

"I was captivated by his masterpiece, *Fish in Water*. It truly stood out," Lu recalled.

When she told him they were rowers, the artisan proposed a deal.

"I'll give you this if you win the championship," he said. "I'd like to wish you smooth success, like a fish in water."

Lu said she was not only moved, but also motivated by his offer.

"I couldn't stop thinking every day that I had to win the championship, just so that I could hold that fish!" she recalled.

Wang watched their match and said he was dazzled by Lu's "exceptional talent."

"I feel immense pride for the Chinese people and the athletes in our Chinese sports delegation."

Palm-fiber crafts are among the most popular items at the Cultural House, which is, in turn, one of the most popular destinations for Village residents. Wang believes the venue



Clockwise from top: Rowing champions Lu Shiyu (left) and Shen Shuangmei pose with palm-fiber weaver Wang Li; Two of Wang's artworks — *Fish in Water* and a dragon. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

offers an exceptional platform for visitors to explore traditional Chinese culture and for craftspeople to showcase their talents.

Shen said the Cultural House is her favorite place in the Village, and she returns frequently to experience such folk arts as scarf painting and seal

carving.

"During my last visit, Wang Li patiently taught me how to weave a small rose, and he praised my quick learning," she said.

"Our training routine is often repetitive. So, coming to the cultural center offers a chance to explore

activities that we wouldn't typically encounter and to appreciate aspects of Chinese culture that are usually beyond our reach.

"I find it very meaningful to contribute to the preservation and promotion of intangible cultural heritage."

Asiad digest

Esports

The final day of a historic week of esports competition at the Hangzhou Asian Games saw host China defeat Mongolia 2-1 in a marathon *DOTA2* battle in front of a packed house at China Hangzhou Esports Centre on Monday.

On paper, the Mongolians were in over their heads against a superstar Chinese roster that included two legends of the game — Wang "Ame" Chunyu and Lu "Somnus" Yao — who came out of retirement to join a team built specifically to win Asian Games gold.

After nearly three hours of action, the match culminated with China triumphing in an all-out final assault, claiming victory in the back-and-forth third game to win the gold.

"Getting the victory in club competition is very exciting, but it is a matter of pride for me to win this final and get the gold medal as a member of the national team," said Lu.

"The most important things are never giving up and having the faith of my coach and teammates," he added.

Mind sports



At the center of the Asian Games, a short walk from the thunderous roar of the Olympic Stadium, lies Hangzhou's quietest venue — the Hangzhou Qi-Yuan (Zhili) Chess Hall, a 14-story building surrounded by residential blocks, which hosts the mind sports events, (international) chess, *xiangqi* (Chinese military chess), bridge and Go.

But unlike other Games arenas, the mind sports venue is open only to ath-

letes, officials and accredited media. No spectators are allowed.

Decisive wins in medal matches are accompanied by the orderly shuffle of chairs rather than surges of loud cheering, as athletes quietly leave the field of play. A library-like air prevails.

The muted atmosphere is necessary, however. "If spectators are admitted, there will be lots of distractions, and the players need to concentrate," explained Indian chess team technical official BH Vasanth.

While most contenders across the Hangzhou Asian Games venues thrive off the backing of a lively crowd, the mind sports athletes are not looking for encouragement.

"They don't like people praising them or clapping," said Vasanth.

All mind games events feature multiple concurrent matches, so when one person is about to win, another is thinking deeply and needs silence.

"Each move is very important," said Vasanth. "One small error and they

may lose the game. After they win, then they can celebrate."

Weightlifting

China is no longer the world leader in women's weightlifting, its head coach Wang Guoxin said on Monday, after another record-breaking performance by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Chinese women won three gold medals at the Tokyo Olympic Games in 2021 and are among the favorites in all five weight categories for Paris 2024. But the four women's events in Hangzhou so far have all been won by the DPRK, whose champions have set six world records along the way.

Its latest winners were Kim Il-gyong at 59kg and Rim Un-sim at 64kg. Kim, who came second in the 2017 youth world championships as a 13-year-old, took the snatch world record from Olympic champion Kuo Hsing-chun of Chinese Taipei, who finished third.



Rim finished a long way clear, but because she failed with two attempts, she was not able to go for a world record. China took silver in both events through Luo Shifang (59kg) and Pei Xinyi (64kg).

"The DPRK's team at the Asian Games has delivered wonderful results," said Wang. "Our sport is developing. This is a healthy trend, and we welcome it."

"Now, the DPRK is ahead of us, and we need to catch up. We need to reflect on our training methods. We cannot remain in (our) comfort zone."