

《北京张家口加强基础设施申办2022年冬奥会》

北京张家口加强基础设施申办2022年冬奥会

China's announcement that it's bidding to host the 2022 Winter Olympics has given a boost to winter sports and to local economies. The two jointly bidding cities, Beijing and the neighboring city of Zhangjiakou, are wasting no time in upgrading their facilities.

Grand ambitions and high hopes. Zhangjiakou is home to some of the world's best ski resorts, it's popular with China's ski-ing jet-set. Some of whom are very young.

Xiongxiong is only 6 years old. He comes here to the Wanlong Ski Resort almost every weekend. This is very likely to be an Olympic venue if China wins the bid.

"I love skiing. Many people here love skiing. If the Olympics are chosen to be held here, I would come to ski every day," he said.

The winning city won't be chosen until July. But Zhangjiakou is wasting no time getting ready. The snowy city has a population of just 4 million, a relatively small place for such a big event.

Already, chairlifts are being upgraded, hotels refitted and new ski slopes are being established. The fast improving facilities are attracting more and more Chinese with a passion for winter sports.

Ni Gang and his wife started skiing ten years ago. Back then, it was very much a minority past-time in China.

"At the time, there was only one very small ski resort in the Beijing suburbs. So we used to travel to Europe to find the best ski resorts. But now with Zhangjiakou quickly catching up with global standards, we can enjoy skiing almost on our doorstep," he said.

The city of Zhangjiakou is now becoming a backyard for people in Beijing during their weekends and holidays. It's now only 3 hours drive from capital Beijing to this ski resort. But the government says it's still not enough. A new high-speed railway is now being built, which will significantly shorten the distance to only 40 minutes.

Whether or not China wins the bid, the high-speed railway will be completed by 2017. This beautiful resort will be closer than ever to the heart of the country.

But for many, the biggest factor working against the Chinese joint-city bid is the air quality in the capital. Air

pollution was a big problem for Beijing in 2013, with poor quality readings for over two thirds of the year.

Authorities in the capital say they're tackling the problem, and have pledged significant improvements by 2017.

"Most of the IOC members have full confidence in China. They know that if China promises something, it will do it. There is full support from the government, both central government and local government. Not just moral support -- financial support," said Wei Jizhong, former secretary-general of Chinese Olympic Committee.

And it's not just the air pollution. Many analysts fear China's chances of getting the games in 2022 are remote simply because of geography.

South Korea will host the 2018 Winter Games, while Japan is staging the 2020 Summer Olympics. That means 2022 is likely to be away from East Asia.

But for many families like Xiongxiang's, just the process of bidding will help to inspire their passion in winter sports and broaden the ambitions of many local residents. After all, they say the Olympic spirit is all about progress and competition.

