

# Olympics: Tokyo pledges 'model' drug-free Games



This handout picture taken on June 26, 2013 shows (left to right) President of Japan Anti-Doping Agency (JADA) Hidenori Suzuki, President of Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacture's Association (FPMAJ) Haruo Naito and Director of World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) Asia/Oceania regional office Kazuhiro Hayashi posing for a group photo after they signed documents of a joint declaration on cooperation in the promotion of anti-doping activity and development of integrity of sport in Tokyo. Tokyo is promising a model Olympic Games with the world's strictest anti-doping rules if it wins the right to host the 2020 edition. -- FILE PHOTO: AFP

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FUKUO TOKYO (AFP) - Tokyo is promising a model Olympic Games with the world's strictest anti-doping rules if it wins the right to host the 2020 edition.

Exacting testing in top-notch laboratories combined with strong social disapproval of chemical enhancements give Japan a leading edge in the race to stamp out doping in sport, advocates say.

"Japan is a world leader in anti-doping, and we are proud to have one of the world's highest standards of medical care," said Mr Masato Mizuno, vice president of the Japanese Olympic Committee.

"Japan will continue to be in the forefront of anti-doping activities going forward, and in 2020 we look forward to offering a model of clean sport as a legacy of excellence throughout the world."

Japan's record with doping is admirable, say sport insiders.

"It is true that Japan is one of the strongest countries" as far as drug testing is concerned, Canadian Dick Pound, an International Olympic Committee member who was the first president of the World Anti-Doping Agency (Wada), told AFP in Lausanne.

"The country that does have a few problems is Spain," he said, but added it would not be the decisive factor in the final decision on awarding the competition.

The IOC meets in Buenos Aires in September to decide which of the three shortlisted cities - Tokyo, Istanbul and Madrid - will play host to thousand of athletes for the 2020 summer Games.

Tokyo has received widespread praise for a bid that promises a highly compact and environmentally friendly games in a city with an already well-developed infrastructure.

Growing public support for the project is also helping, making Tokyo the bookies' favourite.

It is seen as ready to trounce Madrid, where the expense of hosting one of the biggest sporting jamborees on the planet is worrying citizens already groaning under the weight of austerity measures.

Commentators say Istanbul had been doing well, pushing its status as a bridge between Europe and Asia, but recent disturbances in which riot police fired teargas against demonstrators will have given some IOC members pause for thought.

Wada figures show that more than 100 athletes were caught for doping violations in the run-up to and during last year's London Olympics. Tokyo will be looking to better that.

The IOC brings with it a formidable anti-doping apparatus, which its medical director, Mr Richard Budgett, said would be augmented by a national system.

He said the aim of holding a doping-free Olympics was a noble one.

"It is a fantastic inspiration," he said.

"Using the Games to inspire anyone to increase their deterrence, increase their intelligence on the way their testing" is done will really help.

"I think Japan with their strong history of antidoping, with their very active large laboratory, will be a great place to do that," he added.

According to the Japan Anti-Doping Agency (Jada), only 40 cases of doped athletes have been discovered in Japan since 2007. The US Anti-Doping Agency website, meanwhile, shows there were 37 doping violations in the US in 2012 alone.

"We can't say that any country is absolutely doping free, but we obviously do know that some have more risk of having doping because of their historical culture of athletes and coaches who were doping than in other countries," said Mr Budgett.

"And the statistics show that there is a very low incidence of doping in Japan. I suspect that is related to the social structure and the character of Japanese sport," he said.

Ms Atsuko Okamoto, a researcher at Waseda University in Tokyo, agrees.

"Athletes here convey a positive image with values such as health, effort, sportsmanship, which elevates them to the level of heroes for many people," she said.

"On the other hand, drugs are associated with evil and things that do harm."

In society at large, penalties for drug possession are stiff, and can include jail for even the possession of small amounts of marijuana.

"It is impossible to know for sure that any country, any sport, is doping free because the athletes are not tested all the time," said Budgett.

But an avowal to make the Games as free from drugs as possible, he says, is a great ambition.

"We can use the Games to improve the level of antidoping in any host country and that... is (a) fantastic legacy."