

# Pakistan sees China as sports mentor

POA PRESIDENT PROPOSES EXCHANGE OF COACHES AND ATHLETES AHEAD OF LONDON 2012

By CUI JIA  
CHINA DAILY

GUANGZHOU — Pakistan hopes China will help accelerate its transformation from a sporting minnow to another Asian dragon.

“We need help in almost all sports, especially swimming and track and field. We have so much to learn from China,” Syed Arif Hasan, president of the Pakistan Olympic Association (POA), told China Daily on Thursday.

“Without a doubt, China is a sporting giant in Asia and the world, and its help is crucial to the development of sports in Pakistan.”

China has sent some of its best table tennis, swimming and wushu coaches to Pakistan, which has already reaped the rewards at the Asiad, courtesy of Ijaz Ahmed's silver medal in the men's *sanshou* 75 kg.

Arif Hasan said he wants to go one better and put his athletes in a Chinese training environment that extends beyond the vision of a handful of imported coaches.

“I'd like China to give our athletes opportunities to train and compete in China with local Chinese athletes, which is something that would definitely help us improve,” he said, adding that he plans to write a letter to that effect to Liu Peng, president of the China Olympic Association.

In return, Pakistan could help China's cricket and field hockey teams, he said.

Pakistan's athletes generally fare badly at the Olympics and Asian Games, a trend blamed on a lack of financial support from their government.

“The government offers no reward for athletes after they win medals for the country, which is very disappointing for them considering all the efforts they put in,” said Arif Hasan.

Unlike China, which derives great patriotic pride from its athletes' sporting success, Pakistan has a low budget for sports and sports infrastructure.

“Parents in Pakistan don't want their children to become professional athletes. They prefer them to be doctors or lawyers who are paid a lot more,” said Arif Hasan.

“What Pakistan needs is not a grand stadium like the Bird's Nest in Beijing, but many accessible



sports venues with basic equipment at the community level, so every sports lover can get to play.”

He said officials are often haranguing him about results without investing in the athletes first, and said he hopes to see them build more organizations at the grassroots level that can detect young talent and ensure proper training.

“Before international events, they always ask me how many gold medals I'm going to bring home. I always answer that it depends on the amount of support you have given our athletes,” he said.

Meanwhile, Arif Hasan welcomed a decision by the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) on Nov

12 to lend financial support to his flood-ravaged country.

“We have asked our finance committee to allocate whatever amount of funds we can give them,” said OCA President Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahad Al-Sabah.

The OCA and the International Olympic Committee pledged \$100,000 earlier this year to repair

Q & A  
>> SYED ARIF HASAN

**What do Pakistan's athletes need in order to improve?**

They need more financial support from the government. They should be given rewards for winning and be paid a lot more so their families can be supported.

**What kind of sports facilities does Pakistan need?**

We don't need a grand stadium like the Bird's Nest in Beijing, but we need many accessible sports venues with basic equipment at the community level, so every sports lover can get to play.

**Does Pakistan need China's help in sports?**

Besides sending us the best coaches, I'd also like China to give our athletes opportunities to train and compete in China with local Chinese athletes, which would definitely help us improve. We need help in almost all sports, especially swimming and track and field. We have so much to learn from China.

**Do you think your women's team will win the first cricket gold medal of the Asian Games?**

Of course, I have high hopes for the girls. I will be at the stadium to cheer for them on Friday. I will also make sure the match will be broadcast live in Pakistan so everyone is going to be supporting them.

**Q: What do you think of the quality of the Guangzhou Games?**

They are as good as the Beijing Olympics. I think London (which will host the 2012 Olympics) will be under a lot of pressure after what China has done.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

**Syed Arif Hasan, president of the Pakistan Olympic Association (POA), says Pakistan has much to learn from China's sports expertise.**

the POA's sports infrastructure that was damaged by the summer flooding.

As of Thursday, Pakistan has won two medals at the Guangzhou Games, including a bronze for its snooker team.

Its women's cricket team will play in the tournament final on Friday.