In the north-western suburbs of Beijing, a group of buildings has sprung up. Rich in colour, varied in design and blending traditional Chinese style with modern architectural techniques, they add beauty to the skyline of the Chinese capital.

A total of twenty-seven gymnasiums and stadiums are being built or revamped for the 11th Asian Games. Five new gymnasiums have already been completed, one of which is the University Gymnasium. The other four are the Yuetan Gymnasium, the Haidian Gymnasium, the Gymnasium of the Beijing Physical Culture Institute and the Xiannongtan Gymnasium. Nine other projects will be completed by the end of this year, including the Chaoyang Gymnasium, the Tiantan Tennis Centre, the Shijingshan Gymnasium, the Muxiyuan Gymnasium, the Ditan Gymnasium, the Changping Velodrome, the Xiannongtan Stadium and the Workers’ Stadium.

On the five newly-completed gymnasiums, the University Gymnasium stands out for its unique beauty. A square cream-coloured structure, it is supported by four huge octagonal columns at the corners and covered with a light-green roof bulging at the top and sloping down on all sides. The white reinforced concrete eaves and the cylindrical columns join to form what looks like traditional Chinese archways, and the huge dark-brown glass on four sides of the building serves as a foil to the cream tiles decorating the walls. The effect of all this is that the whole structure is of a rich national style blended with the line features of modern architecture. With a building space of 9,600 square metres and a seating capacity of 4,000, the University Gymnasium will be the venue of basketball matches during the Games.

The designs of all the new gymnasiums are ingenious and diverse in structure and style. When viewed from a distance, the facade of the octagonal Yuetan Gymnasium, in alternate colours of blue and white, looks like an octagonal pavilion tucked away in the serene hills. The Haidian Gymnasium, a square structure with a square roof, is embellished with large white panels on all four sides and reminds one of an imposing castle of ancient times. The Gymnasium of the Beijing Physical Culture Institute is a polygonal building whose roof is supported by steel struts at four corners, giving the appearance of an improvised summer-house in a seaside resort. The Chaoyang Gymnasium, for its part, is oval in shape, with its roof hanging from a steel structure which looks like a suspension bridge.

The Shijingshan Gymnasium is situated in the Shijingshan district in the western suburbs of Beijing. Its roof is made by “piecing together” three huge triangles with their projecting lower edges turned up like the wings of a bird. Running down along the joints of the triangles are ladder-like parallel lines for decoration. The whole
building gives the appearance of a butterfly with spread wings, attracting the attention of passers-by.

The Beijiao Natatorium is located in the northern suburbs of Beijing, where the Asian Games Village, a stadium for athletic events and a handball gymnasium are also situated. Standing out prominently among the group of buildings there, the blue-and-white swimming complex is shaped like a ship with two square “masts”, one at the bow and the other at the stern. Seen from afar, the whole structure looks like a swan floating on the water or a boat ready to set sail. The “mast” at the bow, which houses diving platforms, is 90 metres high. While economizing on building materials, it adds novelty to the design.

The newly-built gymnasiums have each a seating capacity of 3,000 to 4,000. Events to be staged in these new gymnasiums will be: boxing in the gymnasium of the Beijing Physical Culture Institute, judo in the Yuetan Gymnasium, wushu in the Haidian Gymnasium, volleyball in the Chaoyang Gymnasium, weightlifting in the Ditan Gymnasium, wrestling in the Shijingshan Gymnasium, sports acrobatics in the Muxiyuan Gymnasium and badminton in the Xiannongtan Gymnasium.

Work on three other stadiums will be completed soon. The Workers’ Stadium, now being revamped, was built in 1959 for the First National Games. With a seating capacity of 80,000, it will be the main venue of the 11th Asian Games and the place where the final round of football matches will be played. The newly-built Changping Velodrome, covering an area of 4,000 square metres, can accommodate 3,000 to 5,000 spectators. The Xiannongtan Stadium will serve as one of the venues for football matches after it has been revamped.

All these new gymnasiums and stadiums will adequately meet the needs of the 11th Asian Games. These colourful and beautifully designed structures will add lustre to the cityscape of the Chinese capital and contribute to the development of Chinese architecture.

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