

The Asian Games, also known as Asiad,[1] is a continental multi-sport event held every fourth year among athletes from all over Asia. The Games were regulated by the Asian Games Federation (AGF) from the first Games in New Delhi, India in 1951, until the 1978 Games. Since the 1982 Games, they have been organized by the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA), after the breakup of the Asian Games Federation.[2] The Games are recognized by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and are described as the second largest multi-sport event after the Olympic Games.[3][4]

Nine nations have hosted the Asian Games. Forty-six nations have participated in the Games, including Israel, which was excluded from the Games after its last participation in 1974. The games were most recently held in Hangzhou, China.

Since 2010, host cities manage both the Asian Games and the Asian Para Games, the latter an event for athletes with disabilities to compete with each other. The Asian Para Games are held immediately following the Asian Games, but the exclusion of Asian Para Games from any Asian Games host city contract means that both events will run independently of each other.

## Origins

The Far Eastern Championship Games existed previous to the Asian Games, the former mooted in 1912 for a location set between Japan, the Philippines, and China. The inaugural Far Eastern Games were held in Manila in 1913 with 6 participating nations. There were ten Far Eastern Games held by 1934. The second Sino-Japanese War in 1934, and Japan's insistence on including the Manchu Empire as a competitor nation in the Games, brought China to announce its withdrawal from participation. The Far Eastern Games scheduled for 1938 were cancelled. The organization was discontinued.[5]

## Formation

After World War II, several areas in Asia became sovereign states. Many of these countries sought to exhibit Asian prowess without violence. At the London 1948 Summer Olympics, a conversation started amongst China and the Philippines to restore the idea of the Far Eastern Games. Guru Dutt Sondhi, the Indian International Olympic Committee representative, believed that the restoration of the Far Eastern Games would sufficiently display the spirit of unity and level of achievement taking place in Asian sports. He proposed the idea of a new competition – which came to be the Asian Games. The Asian Athletic Federation would eventually be formed. A preparatory committee was set up to draft the charter for this new body. On 13 February 1949, the Asian Athletic Federation was formally inaugurated in New Delhi, announced as the inaugural host city to be held in 1950.[6][7]

## Tumultuous years of crises

## The first Asian Games opening ceremony

In 1962, the Games were hit by several crises. The host country Indonesia, refused to permit the participation of Israel and Taiwan due to political recognition issues. The IOC terminated its sponsorship of the Games and terminated Indonesia's membership in the IOC.[8] The Asian Football Confederation (AFC),[9] International Amateur Athletics Federation (IAAF) and International Weightlifting Federation (IWF), also removed their recognition of the Games.[10][11]

South Korea renounced its plan to host the 1970 Asian Games on the grounds of a national security crisis; the main reason was due to a financial crisis. The previous host, Thailand, would host the Games in Bangkok using funds transferred from South Korea.[12] Japan was asked to host but declined the opportunity as they were already committed to Expo '70 in Osaka.[13] This edition marked the Games' inaugural television broadcasting, world-wide.[14] In Tehran, in 1974, the Games formally recognized the participation of China, North Korea, and Mongolia. Israel was allowed to participate despite the opposition from the Arab world, while Taiwan was permitted to continue taking part (as "Chinese Taipei") although its status was abolished in general meeting on 16 November 1973 by Games Federation.[15]

Prior to the 1978 Games, Pakistan retracted its plan to host the 1975 Games due to a financial crisis and political issues.[16] Thailand offer to host and the Games were held in Bangkok. As in 1962, Taiwan and Israel were refused the participation by Games Federation, amid political issues and security fears.[17] Several governing bodies protested the ban. The IAAF threatened to bar the participating athletes from the 1980 Summer Olympics.[18] Several nations withdraw prior to the Games opening.[19]

#### Reorganization and expansion

These events led the National Olympic Committees in Asia to revise the constitution of the Asian Games Federation. The Olympic Council of Asia was created in November 1981, excluding Israel.[20] India was scheduled to host in 1982 and the OCA decided not to drop the old AGF timetable. The OCA formally started to supervise the Games with the South Korea 1986 Asian Games.[21] In the succeeding Games, Taiwan (Republic of China) was re-admitted, under pressure by the People's Republic of China to compete as Chinese Taipei.[22]

The 1994 Games held in Hiroshima included the inaugural participation of the former republics of the Soviet Union: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. It was also the inaugural Games held in a host country outside its capital city.[23] However, Iraq was suspended from the Games due to the 1990 Persian Gulf War. North Korea boycotted the Games due to political issues. The Games were hampered during the opening ceremony by the death of Nareshkumar Adhikari, the chief of the Nepalese delegation.[24]

The 1998 Games marked the fourth time the Games were held in Bangkok, Thailand. The opening ceremony was on 6 December; the previous three were on 9 December. King Bhumibol Adulyadej opened the Games; the closing ceremony was on 20 December (the same date as all the previous games hosted by Thailand).