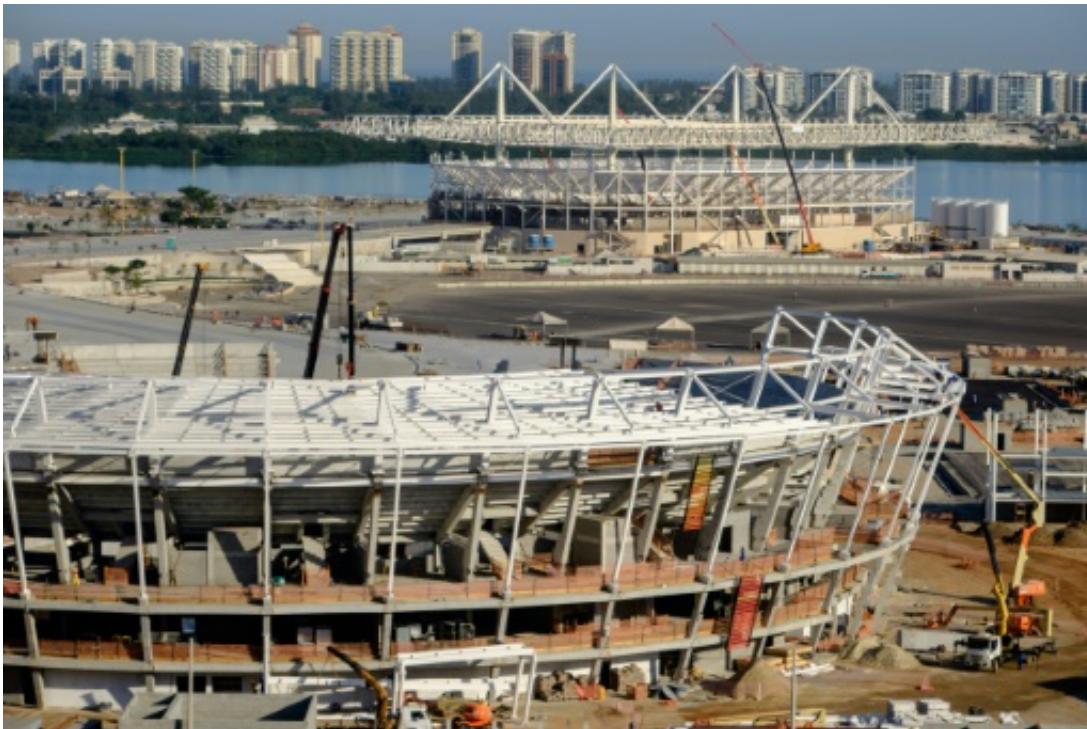


Pollution won't sink Rio Olympics sailing: organizers

July 9 2015, by Sebastian Smith



View of the Tennis Center (front) and the Aquatic Stadium for swimming and water polo for the Rio 2016 Olympic Games under construction in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on June 11, 2015

Sailors at the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro will be protected by a fleet of special trash collecting boats, organizers said Thursday, admitting there is no time to resolve a serious pollution problem.

Most preparations for the Olympics, the world's biggest [sporting event](#), are on track to be completed for the August 5, 2016 opening ceremony, said Rio2016 organizing committee spokesman Mario Andrada.

Asked to rate overall progress on a scale of one to 10, he told AFP: "We are about nine."

The most problematic issue appears to be the stunningly located, but filthy Guanabara Bay, which will host sailing and windsurfing events.

Alarmed by garbage and raw sewage pouring out of Rio and reports of dangerous bacteria, prominent sailors have called for the contest site to be relocated beyond the bay in cleaner Atlantic waters.

Andrada acknowledged that Rio de Janeiro's promise in its original Olympics hosting bid to clean Guanabara was not feasible, but he ruled out changing plans.

"No," he said when asked about moving the site. "The competition can be done with all the safety and fairness inside the bay."

So-called eco-boats—green, rectangular craft driven around picking up rubbish—will be deployed to keep debris from competition areas.

"We have mapped the currents around the bay and we have mapped how the garbage moves around. So around the areas of the regattas we're going to have a special fleet of eco-boats. We already know where the garbage is and we'll take it off.

"The bay will be much better on the games time than it has been," Andrada promised.

'An Everest to climb'



The heavily polluted Guanabara Bay in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, seen on June 10, 2015

In contrast to Brazil's failure to address the fate of Guanabara Bay, other preparations are said to be racing ahead.

"There are no venues (where it) can be said it's delayed at this point. We have all the construction on time. We have the budget to finish the constructions," Andrada said.

"I'm not being overconfident when I say nine, because the main point right at this time is to make sure the constructions are going well and they are."

However, Andrada said there remains "an Everest to climb" over the

next 13 months.

A key new phase starts Wednesday when Rio's famed Maracana Stadium complex hosts volleyball's World League final, the first of 44 high level sporting events being staged in the city up until May next year as a way of testing the Olympics infrastructure.

"Test events will be the last chance to make mistakes," Andrada said.

Delphine Moulin, general manager for test events, told AFP that she was "excited" and "pretty happy with the levels of preparation."

However, she admitted to encountering numerous "surprises."

"When you go from planning drawings and maps to reality, well, when you get on the ground you realize that it's not the same thing," she said.



The entrance gate of the Olympic Park in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on June 11, 2015

"That adds a certain element of urgency."

One big project at "high risk" of not being completed on time is a new subway line linking the Olympic Park to the tourist-friendly south of Rio, auditors said this week.

Promises of security

Organizers and Brazil's government face another headache in securing a city where shootouts between police and drug dealers, murders and armed robberies have become everyday events. Even Rio's Roman Catholic archbishop was carjacked last Sunday.



Girls pose with the Olympic rings at Madureira Park, the third largest park in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on July 1, 2015, 400 days ahead of the Rio 2016 Olympic games

"We will guarantee the safety of everyone who comes to Rio for the games," Andrada said. "We're going to protect them and offer them safe games."

He pointed to the success of security at previous mega events—including the 2014 football World Cup—and promised "top standards of security."

But he would not give details of how this will be achieved next year.

"We just don't want to be too much detailed about security, because it's a very serious issue and confidentiality plays to our advantage," he said.

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