

Tokyo 2020 asks public to donate old phones for medals

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Tokyo's Olympic organising committee is aiming to collect eight tonnes of gold, silver and bronze from old smartphones and other electronic devices to make 5,000 Olympic and Paralympic medals

Tokyo Olympic organisers on Wednesday called on the Japanese public to donate old smartphones and other old electronic devices to help make medals for the 2020 Games.

In a push to give the Olympics an environmentally friendly hue, Tokyo's organising committee is aiming to collect eight tonnes of gold, silver and bronze at recycling bins across Japan from April, officials said, to make 5,000 Olympic and Paralympic medals.

Tokyo 2020 said e-waste such as digital cameras, laptops and games units can also be donated at collection boxes in more than 2,000 stores of mobile phone giant and Olympic sponsor NTT Docomo.

Recycled metals have been used in previous years to make Olympic medals, including in Rio last year where the silver and bronze medals were 30 percent made from recycled materials.

"An Olympic medal is one of the most coveted items in existence," American two-time Olympic decathlete champion Ashton Eaton said.

"People spend decades, often agonising ones, working to obtain one," he added.

Organisers insisted they would look to keep costs as low as possible with Tokyo's preparations for the Games plagued by concerns over soaring prices.

Experts had warned the total Games budget could hit an eye-watering \$30 billion—four times the initial estimate and almost triple that of the 2012 London Olympics.

In response, organisers unveiled a streamlined budget of just under \$17 billion in December.

Officials will be hoping for smoother progress in the run-up to 2020 after a series of embarrassing gaffes since beating Madrid and Istanbul in the race to host the Olympics.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe scrapped plans for the main stadium in July 2015 over its \$2 billion price tag.

Claims of plagiarism then forced them to ditch the Olympic logo, before French prosecutors launched an investigation into how Tokyo won its bid. Japanese Olympic officials deny any wrongdoing.

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