



LONDON'S QUALITY NEWSPAPER

WEST END FINAL

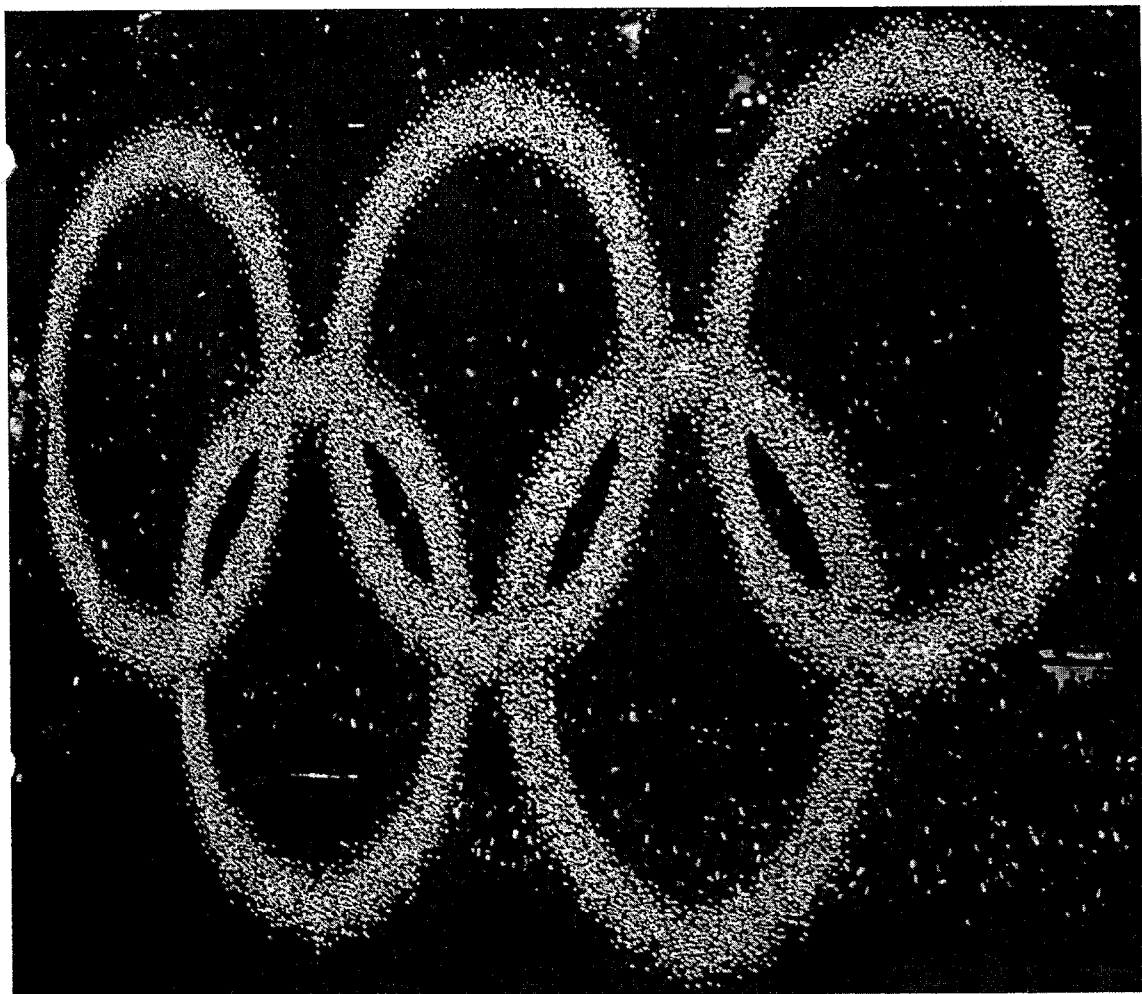
Evening Standard

Friday 8 August 2008

www.standard.co.uk

Incorporating The Evening News 50P

CHINA MAGIC



Lift-off: the Olympic rings, lit by thousands of bulbs in sequence, were raised from the ground to roof level in the Bird's Nest stadium as the Games got off to a spectacular start today

Most ambitious Olympics in history opens with most spectacular show

WITH a heart-stopping burst of fire, what we once called the Bamboo Curtain was raised today on the most ambitious Olympics in history. Hundreds of pyrotechnic jets pierced the Beijing

ANDREW GILLIGAN in Beijing

smog. Exactly 2,008 drummers hammered and shouted a thunderous beat of arrival. Twenty-nine colossal blazing footprints rose into the sky, charged towards the Bird's Nest stadium and fell to earth as the Olympic rings, before rising again. For China, before a TV

audience of four billion, this was the luckiest moment in a thousand years.

It is, too, the start of something even bigger than an Olympic Games. It is, or at least is meant to be, the beginning of China's new era of greatness, witnessed—and

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2 >

NEWS

Life sentence for killer of 'dirty look' schoolboy
PAGE 7

Evening Standard apologises to the Duke of Edinburgh
PAGE 5

New BlackBerry Bold: we put it to the test
PAGE 9

Leonard Cohen adds another London date
PAGE 11

Mayor Boris's first 100 days: the verdicts
PAGE 17

Russian jets shot down in battle for rebel capital
PAGE 29

BUSINESS

Schroders profits dive as punters quit stockmarket
PAGE 31

SPORT

Guaranteed first: five pages of Beijing coverage
BACK PAGE

LONDON WEATHER TONIGHT: 12C (54F)
Dry but mainly cloudy

video terror threat



Beijing troops on stand-by as Islamic group warns of attacks

in China, citing grievances against the government.

The statement said suicide bombers around the world were ready to carry out missions. "Particularly, go to the central Chinese cities and kill the top leaders, soldiers, police, prison wardens and accomplices," it said.

There are two Turkestan terrorist groups, the Turkestan Islamic Party and the East Turkestan Islamic Movement, or ETIM.

Chinese security services believe the ETIM was behind a series of attacks in

Xinjiang. The latest was on Monday when two terrorists used a truck, homemade explosives and knives to kill at least 16 paramilitary police officers and wound 16 others in Kashgar, a desert oasis town.

Security experts blame the Chinese government for not keeping track of the rapid growth among splinter Islamic terrorist groups in western China.

In the weeks leading up to today's opening, China has introduced tighter-than-usual checks on residents and tourists. Visitors, even those who stay

only one night, are expected to register at the local police station.

The Chinese have promised to stage "a show to remember", with more than 15,000 performers and 35,000 fireworks. A star Chinese athlete was being lined up to light the Olympic flame.

But the spectacular ceremony could not end the continuing controversy over human rights. In an open letter published just hours before the ceremony, more than 40 athletes taking part urged the communist regime of president Hu Jintao to respect human rights and reli-



Threat: the video that sparked security fears in Beijing

■ PROTESTERS today descended on the Chinese embassy in London for a human rights rally as the Games were set to begin. About 100 activists, supporting Tibet, Zimbabwe, Sudan and Burma, joined to highlight China's human rights abuses. Liam Allmark, 20, of Students For A Free Tibet — which Lucy Fairbrother and Alan Thom, deported from China this week, also belong to — said: "China is using the Olympics as a whitewash. People should remember what's really going on."

gious freedom. Signatories include men's 110m hurdles world record holder, Dayron Robles of Cuba, and US 400m runner DeeDee Trotter.

This year the British Olympic Association attempted to gag British athletes from commenting on politically sensitive issues by inserting a clause in their contracts telling them they face being sent home if they offended the hosts.

But after protests, the association's chief executive, Simon Clegg, claimed there had been no intention to "restrict athletes' freedom of speech".

HRH The Duke of Edinburgh: apology

IN the Evening Standard of 6 August we stated that the Duke of Edinburgh had been diagnosed as suffering from cancer of the prostate. We now accept that the story was untrue and that he is not suffering from any such condition. We unreservedly apologise both to him and to his family for making this distressing allegation and for breaching his privacy.

LONDON THIS WEEKEND

TOMORROW

Fourth npower Test between England and South Africa, day three. Until Monday, Oval, Kennington.

Mazda London Triathlon. Various venues. Continues Sunday. www.thelondontriathlon.com

Floating lantern ceremony to mark the 53rd anniversary of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings. Walk for peace from Westminster Cathedral at 5.45pm and ceremony at the Peace Pagoda, Battersea Park, at 6.30pm.

Freerunners from Urban Freeflow display their skills in the Piazza at Covent Garden. Performances by Off The Wall from noon until 4pm.

SUNDAY

Portsmouth take on Manchester United in the FA Community Shield. Wembley. www.thefa.com

The London Mela, known as the Asian Glastonbury, with music, food, workshops and stalls. Gunnersbury Park, W3. Noon-8.30pm. Entry free. www.londonmela.org/

Weekend of strikes hits National Rail

DICK MURRAY
Transport Editor

RAIL union bosses today announced four days of strikes starting next Friday. The walkouts, by up to 12,000 RMT union maintenance workers, threaten all services including London commuter routes and long-distance travellers.

But a spokesman for Network Rail said the strike was not expected to result in any train cancellations or delays. He pointed out that during the two previous weekend walkouts train performance had been "better than average."

The spokesman said contingency plans were ready and these would involve fully trained substitute staff.

RMT leaders ordered the strikes for 15 August and the following Saturday, Sunday and Monday in a long-running dispute over conditions.

There have been two previous 48-hour strikes but both were on weekends and had little or no effect on train services. Now the union has escalated the action to include weekdays, meaning commuter services could be delayed or cancelled. Network Rail said changes demanded by the union would cost the company — and commuters and taxpayers — £100 million while offering "nothing in return".

The RMT is calling for "harmonisation", with a single set of terms and conditions for maintenance staff, many of whom transferred into Network Rail from the private sector.

in China to make their 'lucky 8' wedding vows

MARK BLUNDEN

of their child. One couple celebrating their new daughter had delayed her birth, due on Monday. "We are very excited that our baby was born today, on the opening ceremony of the Olympics," said Wei Jixun as his wife Zhao Wei slept.

Official figures show about 3,500 children have been called Aoyun, meaning Olympics, and nearly 5,000 have been named after the mascots — Jingjing, Huanhuan, Beibei, Yingying and Nini.

The number eight is seen as lucky because it sounds similar to the Chinese

word for prosper or wealth, or fortune in some dialects.

Islington town hall has treble, and Westminster more than double, the usual number of wedding and civil partnership ceremonies on their lists today. On a typical August Friday, Islington would stage four ceremonies; today it has 12. Westminster would typically host eight, but is fitting in 19 — and started at 8am.

Westminster superintendent registrar Alison Cathcart said: "It's going to be a fun day, we would have carried on until 8pm, but it's not legal after 6pm unless you're Jewish or a Quaker."



Marriage game: a group wedding in Shanxi province today