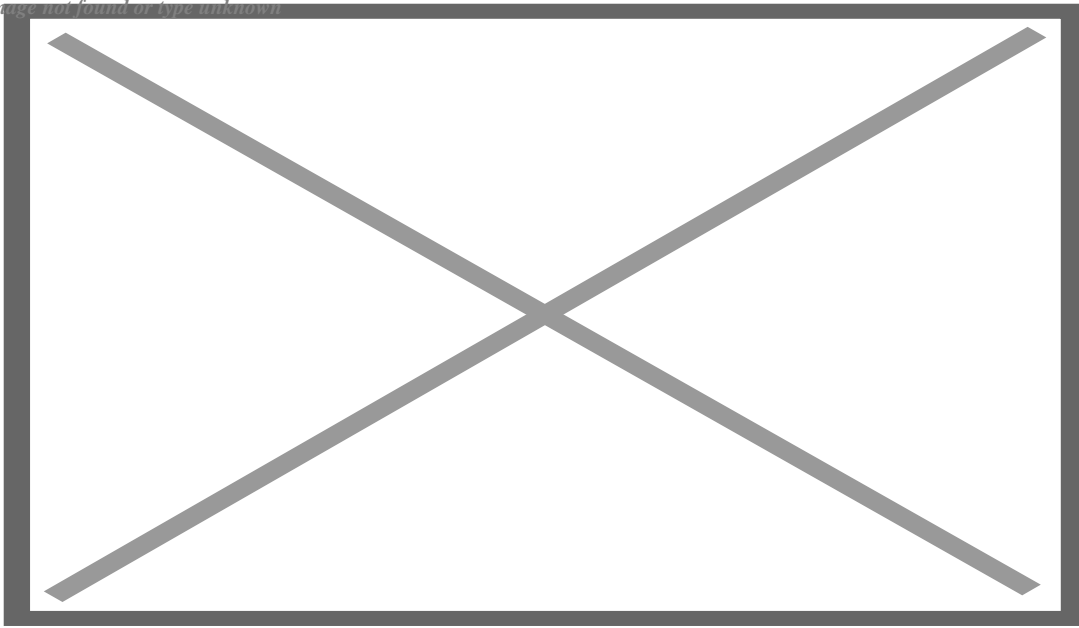


First Cuban athletes arrive at the Future Games

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Kazan, February 22 (JIT) - The first Cuban athletes arrived early Thursday morning in Kazan to take part in the First Future Games, inaugurated hours earlier by Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The team of four basketball players and their coach arrived from Havana after a route with several stopovers. A temperature of -14 degrees Celsius awaited them, which imposes an even lower wind chill.

Gisleydi Sosa, Inder's director of international relations, arrived at the air terminal to welcome them, along with the diligent group of volunteers and event officials on site.

After the necessary formalities, they travelled on to the villa of the remarkable Kazan University of Sport and Tourism, their home these days, located in what was the main venue for the 2013 World Universiade.

Daniel García, one of the players, assured that this is a great opportunity for Cuban basketball, as they will face a totally new championship. "We come prepared and to give our best," he said. He also expressed his confidence that they will be able to adapt quickly to the demands of the climate and make the most of the good preparation they have done on the island.

The presence of Russian President Vladimir Putin and his counterparts from the Commonwealth of Independent States marked the opening of the First Future Games.

Putin's planned speech, an emotional rendition of the national anthem and remarks by other leaders marked a ceremony held at the huge Kazan Expo on the outskirts of the city, one of whose halls was transformed into a remarkable technological and artistic stage.

"Sport should be out of politics, on the contrary, it should bring people together. We have participants from more than 100 countries, from 104 countries, from different continents. There is no doubt that this will be for the good," the Russian leader said to the attentive gaze of the hundreds of attendees.

"The Future Games are free of all political conjuncture, all kinds of discrimination and double standards. I am sure that real sport will reign on the fields of the Games.

The 2,000 athletes from more than 100 countries of the world will show virtuous skill, perseverance and the will to win," he stressed. Putin recalled that the idea of combining classical and e-sports was born in Russia... "Our country has always been and remains one of the world's leading sporting powers, the homeland of great athletes, victories and records," he stressed to applause.

Among those present were the President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko, and the President of Kazakhstan, Kasym-Zhomart Tokayev, who proposed that the 2nd Future Games be held next year in his country. The opening show broke all possible moulds... A large catwalk provided the stage for artists and athletes to build one story after another in absolute interaction with products of artificial intelligence, novel technologies and state-of-the-art audiovisuals.

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