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Constructing green arenas worldwide

Qatar World Cup venue project using container modules heralds change for infrastructure firms

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The next soccer World Cup, to be held in Qatar, is a good four years away, but China International Marine Containers (Group) Ltd (CIMC), the country's largest transportation equipment producer by revenue, has started shipping material for the construction of a unique stadium — a world first — at the venue.

Last month, CIMC shipped the first batch of 990 prefabricated modules for the Ras Abu Aboud Stadium, one of 12 stadiums to be built for the world's biggest tournament. Manufacturing work is expected to finish in April 2019.

For the first time in the world, this will be a large stadium built of prefabricated modules, and it will also be the first "green stadium" that will

be detachable, mobile and recyclable. Never in the history of the FIFA World Cup has such a facility been created, said Zhao Youshan, general manager of CIMC's Yangzhou production base.

The Yangzhou facility is responsible for manufacturing the Qatar-bound container modules. The stadium's construction is scheduled for completion in June 2020.

The project heralds the coming of age of Chinese infrastructure players, industry insiders said. Chinese companies are no longer content bagging projects to build massive stadiums across the world.

Instead, they want to evolve into specialists capable of supplying environmentally friendly products for sustainable growth.

Zhao said the framework of the entire stadium is constructed with steel structure. Then, containers



An artist's impression of the Ras Abu Aboud Stadium, a venue for the 2022 World Cup in Qatar. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

will be put in place like Lego building blocks, and finally painting and decoration will be carried out.

"By adopting container modules, the stadium's construction time can be cut by three years. It can also save building materials and reduce emissions," said Wang Fei, project manager of CIMC's Yangzhou unit.

The modular method is a form of prefabricated construction that allows major structures or components of a building to be made in factories and transported to a construction site for assembly, thereby saving time and reducing waste.

Designed by a Spanish company, the use of modular containers for the Ras Abu Aboud Stadium is inspired by the biggest port in Qatar, the Doha Port, according to the Qatari government's website.

The Ras Abu Aboud Stadium will be seven floors high and cover 450,000 square meters. It will accommodate 40,000 spectators.

Wang said the biggest advantage of the modular construction method is that the structure will be detachable. That means, the container modules can be reused for other purposes — for example, to serve as public housing and other utility purposes.

Moreover, the place where the original stadium stands can be quickly turned into a green park.

CIMC started to export container modules to global markets in 2005. It supplied this product for Brazil's Antarctic research station project in 2017.

"As it usually demands bucket loads of cash to maintain a stadium in a good condition, it is fairly eco-

nomical for small countries such as Qatar, Bahrain and Kuwait to adopt this method to build the stadium for holding big-ticket international matches," said Zhao Yongzhi, a researcher at the Institute of Industrial Economics, which is part of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) in Beijing.

Unlike stadiums in the United States, Japan and Europe, where companies own venues, he said most of the giant stadiums, particularly those in developing economies such as China, Turkey and Indonesia, were built for big games, making them single-purpose venues that are hard to be transformed for other events.

Zhao of CASS said container modules should be introduced more in developing countries as most stadiums there incur losses.

Indian teas to spice up China market

Evolving consumer tastes and low tariffs present remarkable opportunities for exporters

By SIVA SANKAR
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India's exporters of strong-bodied, flavored teas will pull out all the stops to serve China, the world's fastest growing tea market that is outgrowing its fixation with mellow green tea and orthodox varieties, said participants at a Sino-Indian tea trade seminar in Beijing on Oct 31.

China's consumption upgrade, evolving consumer tastes, and the government's opening-up policy marked by relatively low import tariffs are presenting unprecedented opportunities for India's tea exporters, they said.

In 2010, India exported around 2 million kilograms of tea to China. In 2017, the figure swelled to around 9 million kg, a fraction of India's total

exports of 247 million kg.

Arun Kumar Ray, deputy chairman of the Tea Board of India, the federal regulator, said the next target is 20 million kg by 2022 as there is immense growth potential in the China market.

On the anvil are technological upgrades and organic farming to overcome concerns like residue of pesticides and traces of chrome in processed tea leaves, which should help comply with stringent Chinese standards.

Moves are also afoot to allow Chinese buyers to participate in India's electronic auctions of a variety of tea stocks, expected to facilitate greater control over quality and prices.

E-commerce, branding and promotional events, partnerships with Chinese tea distributors, tea

appreciation classes and research to evolve fusion-style flavors by brewing Indian tea the Chinese way are among the planned activities, industry insiders said.

All these opportunities are arising because Chinese consumers, both millennials and old-timers alike, are eager to evolve past mellow, orthodox teas so as to enjoy strong, flavored milk teas.

India is home to a plethora of teas. Its black tea, ready-to-drink brews, spiced teas like *masala chai*, and flavored varieties have been making steady inroads into the China market, said Sujit Patra, secretary of the Indian Tea (producers') Association.

China's relatively low import tariff of 7.5 to 15 percent (compared to 30 percent in Russia, a big export market for Indian tea), the main-

land's strategy to import commodities from multiple markets, China's pro-trade philosophy, and the Indian tea's price advantage are conducive to grow bilateral tea trade, industry insiders said.

Since Indian tea has already met strict quality standards of key export destinations like Japan, Russia and markets in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, confidence is high that it will find acceptance across China soon, they said.

China consumed 1.9 million metric tons of tea worth 235 billion yuan (\$33.8 billion) in 2017, with imports of around 30 million kg worth around \$150 million coming mainly from Sri Lanka, Kenya, Uganda and Vietnam, industry data showed.

India, being in the neighborhood and a potential larger supplier of bet-

ter teas at lower prices, will likely enjoy a distinct edge from now on, experts said. "The potential in China is so huge it's incalculable," said Madhav Sarda, managing director of Golden Tips Darjeeling Tea.

Agreed Wang Qing, president of the China Tea Marketing Association. "The quality of Indian black tea is excellent and stable. Its varieties have unique flavors and charming aromas. The Indian and Chinese tea industries can learn from each other, and explore a common platform for cooperation for mutual benefit in international trade."

Ji Mu, a tea culture trainer, said, "Indian tea is a very exciting addition to the local social scene. I'll recommend various blends to my clients as they are keen to experience strong, stimulating flavors."