

IOC was surprised by Tibet unrest: Rogge

The unrest in Tibet ahead of the Beijing Olympics took the International Olympic Committee (IOC) by surprise, its president Jacques Rogge admitted Wednesday.

The IOC supremo told Wednesday's edition of Germany's Sueddeutsche Zeitung in an interview that the Beijing Olympics would have been a disaster had the IOC openly criticised hosts China over human rights issues instead of conducting silent diplomacy.

'We achieved the maximum. The Games would have been a fiasco if we had dealt more aggressively with China,' said Rogge four months after the Olympics in the Chinese capital.

'We believe that we delivered a few very clear messages to the Chinese. They acted upon some and not upon others. That's their sovereignty.

'We are no sovereign organisation, but it was clear that the IOC had to deal with China as if it was a government. You you work with a government whose support you need you can't be in a state of war with it.'

'There was crisis management ... We knew there would be criticism (when the IOC elected Beijing). But no one could foresee the outbreak of violence in Lhasa on March 10.

'That changed the conditions, set the world against the torch relay and against China.

'We were surprised that the protests came from the Tibetans who are normally non-violent. You can't change the course of history and we definitely underestimated the bloody unrest. From then on we were no longer the actors, we had to react,' Rogge said.

The IOC was criticised for its role around the Games, but Rogge said that he also had a responsibility for the athletes. He named the completion of the torch relay a success as well as China's new foreign media rules and its environmental improvements.

Rogge said the future of the torch relay remained uncertain due to the protests which also occurred around the 2006 Winter Games relay.

The IOC president said the IOC had done its best with almost 5,000 doping tests around the Games and reiterated that the frozen samples will be tested for new-found drugs as soon as reliable methods are available.

Rogge named target tests the main weapon to catch cheaters: 'Target tests are the only thing that works, they raise the number of hits in a big way.' Blood profiles set up together with the World Anti-Doping Agency are also designed to single out offenders.

Commenting on the global economic crisis, Rogge said that the Games in Vancouver 2010, London 2012 and Sochi 2014 are safe due to government guarantees. But he also said the IOC would have been 'foolish' if it had not postponed the US TV rights talks for the 2016 Games due to the recession.

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