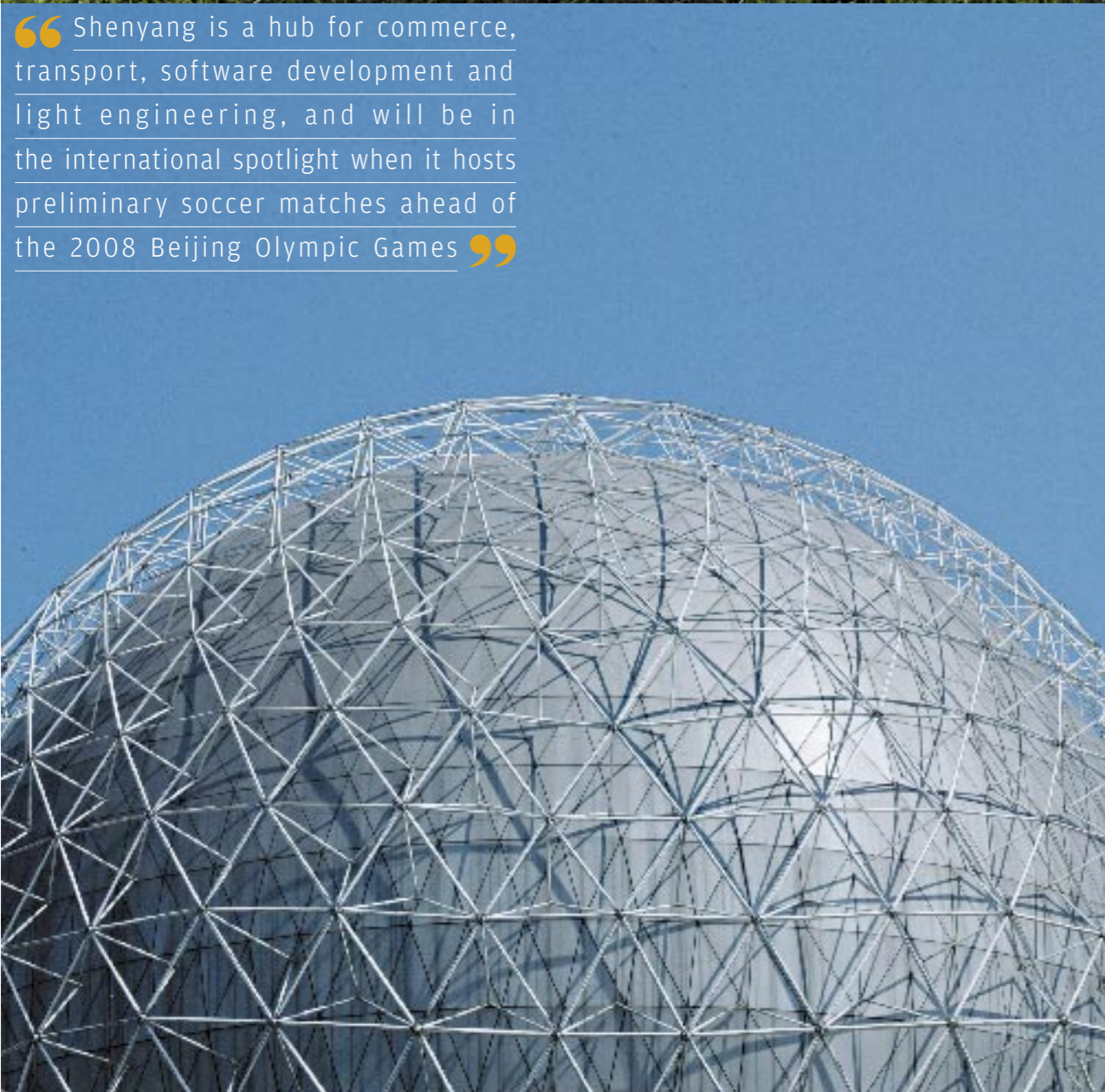


## Capital ambitions

A visit to the magnificent former Imperial Palace may conjure up images of the past but Shenyang is also a city embracing its future as a fast-moving commercial hub and centre for the performing arts

The Manchu Forbidden City, built during the Qing Dynasty by the Manchus in the city of Shenyang, Liaoning Province. 位於遼寧省的瀋陽故宮是滿州人於清朝時代所興建的。



“ Shenyang is a hub for commerce, transport, software development and light engineering, and will be in the international spotlight when it hosts preliminary soccer matches ahead of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games ”

At the heart of Shenyang in China's north-eastern Liaoning province lies a magnificent former Imperial Palace, the near-equal in scale and grandeur of Beijing's Forbidden City. As a Unesco World Heritage site, it stands as a vivid reminder of the city's status as a one-time capital for Nurhaci, the formidable Manchu chieftain whose descendants, as the Qing emperors, were to rule all of China for close to 300 years.

Wandering amid the evocatively named Ten Princes' Pavilion, Phoenix Chamber and Grand Politics (Dazheng) Hall, the visitor can easily conjure up images of bright-robed court officials and battle-hardened military commanders with their schemes and intrigues for breaching the Great Wall to the south and completing the final overthrow of the faltering Ming dynasty.

Nurhaci, who conceived and inspired these grand ambitions, was born in 1559 in a world far removed from the throne room he would come to know. History relates that he was a member of the Gioro family, which originated on the Korean peninsula, and trained as a soldier from a young age.

At the time, conflict was common between the nomadic Jurchen, or Manchu, tribes which ranged across the far northern plains and served as vassals on the outermost edges of the Ming empire, regulating their own affairs and posing little or no threat to the centres of power in Beijing. However, all that began to change as Nurhaci steadily rose to pre-eminence.

Spurred to action by the murder of both his father and grandfather in a tribal raid in 1582, he set about gaining revenge and, in the course of the next 30 or so years, fought, conquered and subsequently united the disparate bands into a cohesive military and political force.

By 1616, he felt secure enough to proclaim himself “the brilliant khan who benefits all nations” and the head of a new dynasty. Initially, this was known as the Jin, but was renamed Qing or “pure” as its territory and influence expanded southwards and westwards. In the meantime, Nurhaci, like any great ruler, had also turned his thoughts to administrative and cultural matters. He is credited with the forming of the so-called “banner system” of dividing the military into eight sections and organising each behind its own flag.

Seeking a suitable capital, he settled on Shenyang. Known as Mukden in Manchu, the city had long been an important centre for trading furs and ginseng, but it was transformed by the magnificent new palace, with its massive courtyard, pillared pavilions, living quarters and elaborate architectural motifs.

Work on the main buildings began in 1625, but Nurhaci was never to see their final splendour. He died the following year as a result of wounds sustained in battle and now lies in a tomb to the east of Shenyang.

Power passed to his son Huang Taiji, who oversaw the completion of the palace complex in 1636, but after eight short years the capital was moved to Beijing in a bid to consolidate power and suppress any attempts at rebellion. Later Manchu emperors – most notably Yongcheng, Qianlong and Kangxi, who ruled during the 17th and 18th centuries – brought China a period of great prosperity and geographical expansion.

The dynasty, though, was destined to fall, weakened by war, poor harvests, foreign incursions and its own isolationism.

Forced to abdicate in 1912, Puyi was the Qing's “last emperor”, but in a historical footnote was obliged to return to his Manchu roots in northeast China in the 1930s as the nominal head of the Japanese puppet state of Manchukuo.

Since those days, Shenyang itself has undergone a dramatic transformation. For many years, it was known mainly as centre for heavy industry, but now, benefiting from the mainland's economic boom, it has become a fast-moving hub for commerce, transport, software development and light manufacturing. Through this process of growth and economic expansion, Shenyang has gradually merged with neighbouring Fushun, creating a modern metropolis of real international status.

The city is also home to acclaimed performing arts and acrobatic troupes, and will be firmly in the international spotlight in August, when the 60,000-seat Shenyang Olympic stadium hosts some of the preliminary matches for the 2008 Olympic soccer tournament.

In a place of such cultural and historical riches, Kerry Properties has seen the attractions, as well as the great potential the city possesses. Therefore, the company is undertaking a complex development in Shenyang's Shenhe District, including a hotel, exhibition space, shopping mall, office, residential and apartments, the first phase of which is due for completion in 2012.

### 盛京鴻圖

瀋陽市位於中國東北遼寧省的中心，威攝睥睨的滿州王族努爾哈齊曾建都於此，雄偉巍峩的瀋陽故宮，已被聯合國教育科學暨文化組織列為文化遺產，更與北京故宮並列為兩大完整的明清皇宮建築群。徘徊在十王亭、鳳凰樓和大政殿間，教人神遊於當年女真族色彩斑斕的朝服，還有鎧甲鱗鱗、旌旗片片、威風凜凜的將士如何跨越長城，殲滅明朝，建立大清帝國，統治中國凡三百年。

1559年努爾哈齊在女真一個小部族酋長家中出生，祖先來自朝鮮半島，與其他女真部族同受明朝封土於東北塞外。他雖家境清寒，卻胸懷祖輩建國鴻圖。然而邊疆部眾，鬪牆屢屢，無力威脅中原。可恨其祖父及父親，均為明將所殺，令他矢志復仇。三十年來克敵無數，於1616年完成合併大業，稱汗建後金王朝，後改名為清，版圖拓展至西南部。一如歷史上偉大的統治者，創建八旗軍，並選了當時的皮草及人參貿易中心瀋陽為首都。

1625年開始大興土木，興建瑰麗堂皇的皇宮，惜翌年傷重沙場而死，葬於瀋陽，無法親睹畫棟雕樑的宮殿落成。其子皇太極繼承皇位，為鞏固權力和壓制叛亂，於8年後遷都北京，繼後的康雍乾盛世，西征南伐拓充中國版圖，在17、18世紀締造了空前的繁榮。及清朝後葉外戰連連失利、旱澇失收、閉關自守、官吏腐敗，國力日衰，1912年末代皇帝溥儀被迫退位。及後在日本的扶植下於1930年在東北再次當上短暫的偽滿州國傀儡皇帝。

由於中國大陸經濟蓬勃增長，瀋陽經歷了戲劇性的變革，從昔日的重工業重鎮，快速轉型為商業、運輸、軟件開發及輕工業中心。更成功地孕育不少出色藝術與雜耍人才，今年八月世人眼光將會聚焦於此，蓋2008年奧運部分首圈足球賽，將在可容60,000觀眾的瀋陽奧林匹克體育館舉行。

瀋陽、撫順兩市相鄰，無論在歷史、地理、文化及經濟上，都予人有一脈相連的感覺，同城化後國際地位將更為重要，彼此相輔相承，共創新里程。基於瀋陽這些令人神往的歷史、文化底蘊和不可置疑的經濟潛力，嘉里建設已投得土地，開展瀋陽的綜合發展項目，包括酒店、會展、商場、辦公室、公寓及住宅，預期第一期將於2012年落成。