

The First Asian Games Championships will be held in March 1951 at New Delhi

SHORT HISTORY OF THE ASIAN GAMES FEDERATION

The Asian Games Federation came into existence on the 13th of February 1949, as the result of a conference of representatives of Asian Countries held in New Delhi.

This conference held on the 12th and 13th of February was a culmination of two years of effort and of hoping.

1947

Early in 1947, Mr. G. D. Sondhi, who is member of the I. O. C. for India, who had initiated and carried through the First Western Asiatic Games in March 1934, at New Delhi, wrote to H. H. Shri Yadavindra Singh, Maharaja of Patiala, and President of the Indian Olympic Association, suggesting that advantage be taken of the presence in New Delhi of delegates to the Asian Relations Conference, to contact and to interest them in the formation of an Asian Games Federation.

On His Highness' agreeing to this Mr. Sondhi issued a note explaining the objects of the proposed Federation and interviewed as many of the delegates as were available. Most of them expressed their approval of the idea, and some were quite enthusiastic.

It is worth adding here that the scheme of Asian Games had the support of no less a person than Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru, Prime Minister of India who had been informed of it by Mr. Sondhi. As a matter of fact it was at the suggestion of Pandit Nehru that the name Asiatic Games, as originally proposed, was changed to Asian Games.

As the proposed Asian Games were to be international in character, the next step was to get the approval of the Indian Olympic Association. This approval was given at

its annual meeting in July 1947 at Lucknow, but the Association did not take any further action in the matter.

Finding no progress at that end, Mr. Sondhi, modified his scheme and instead of its covering other games and sports, for which the co-operation of the Indian Olympic Association was essential, turned it into one of an Asian Athletic (track and field) Championships only for which the permission of the Amateur Athletic Federation of India alone was needed. The Amateur Athletic Federation of India at its meeting in February 1948, not only gave its approval, but gave Mr. Sondhi, its President, full powers to implement the project and asked him to go ahead with it. The first step now was to set up an Organising Committee to take up the work of inviting and preparing for the Championships.

His Highness the Maharaja of Patiala, as President of the Indian Olympic Association, was approached by Mr. Sondhi to become the President of the Organising Committee of the First Asian Athletic Championships. On his agreeing to this, early in July 1948, letters of invitation were issued to various Asian countries over his signatures as President, and Mr. Sondhi's as Chairman, of the Organising Committee. As the invitation was only for Athletics (track and field), in order to complete the formalities, the invitation of the organising Committee was backed by a letter from Mr. Sondhi as President of the Amateur Athletic Federation of India. But, July 1948 was not the right time to propose such schemes, for most of the countries were busy with their preparations for the London Olympic Games. The immediate response was, therefore, rather disappointing. This, however, did not act as a deterrent, for, it was hoped to contact all countries in London in the very near future.

MEETING IN LONDON - AUGUST 1948

A meeting was called by Mr. Sondhi, for 8th August, at Mount Royal Hotel, London, « to consider the formation of an Asian Games Federation ». Invitations were sent to the Chief Managers of the national teams of Korea, China, Philippines, Singapore, Burma, Ceylon, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon and Syria. In other words, all the Asian countries that took part in the London Olympic Games were asked to attend. The following gentlemen attended the meeting:

1. Mr. Chung, Han Pun, President, Korean Amateur Athletic Association.
2. Mr. Gunsun Hoh, Secretary General, China National Amateur Athletic Federation.
3. Mr. K. C. Synn, Korean Olympic Committee.
4. Mr. Jorge B. Vargas, President, Philippines Amateur Athletic Federation.
5. Mr. Simeon G. Torribio, Philippines Amateur Athletic Federation.
6. Mr. Candido C. Bartolome, Philippines Amateur Athletic Federation.
7. Mr. Thaw Zin, Burma Olympic Association.
8. Mr. W. H. D. Perera, Secretary General, Ceylon Olympic Association.
9. Mr. A. C. Das, Indian Olympic Association.
10. Mr. G. D. Sondhi, President, Amateur Athletic Federation of India.

This meeting considered carefully India's proposals (1) for the First Asian Athletics Championship Meet to be held in New Delhi in February 1949, and (2) for the formation of an Asian Games Federation.

The proposal for an Asian Games Federation was enthusiastically and unanimously accepted, and a Sub-Committee consisting of Messrs Gunsun Hoh (China), K. C. Synn (Korea), Candido C. Bartolome or Jorge B. Vargas (Philippines), and G. D. Sondhi (India), was appointed to draw up the constitution and bye-laws of the Asian Athletic Federation. (To avoid confusion it may be stated that the word « Athletic » was used in the American sense which includes under it what is understood by « Games » by the English. Later on, in the meetings at New Delhi, on 12th and 13th of February 1949, the word « Games » was substituted for the word « Athletic ».

The proposal for the First Asian Athletic (track and field only) Championships in February 1949 at New Delhi, was also accepted but with a modification. It was felt that all efforts should be directed towards the bigger Asian Championships to be held every four years, and that the 1949 Athletic Championship Meet proposed by India should be treated as an Invitation Meet only. It was added that the occasion of the Invitation Meet be utilised to hold a conference of

Asian countries to finalise the constitution drawn up by the sub-committee.

The Sub-Committee met on Wednesday, 11th August 1948, in the room of Mr. Jorge B. Vargas, at Mount Royal Hotel, Its chief proposals were:

1. That an Asian Amateur Athletic Federation (the name was later on changed to Asian Games Federation at the New Delhi meeting) be set up.
2. That this Federation should hold Asian Championships on a modified model of the International Games, every four years beginning from 1950.
3. That the programme of the Championships should include: Track and Field Athletics, Swimming, Tennis (doubles and singles), Baseball, Hockey, Basketball, Volleyball, Association Football, Boxing, Wrestling, Weight-lifting.
4. That the constitution and the bye-laws of the proposed Federation be finalised at a meeting to be held in New Delhi, during the Invitation Meet in February 1949.

The Invitation Athletics Meet, in February 1949, however, could not materialise on account of various causes, internal and external, and invitation to it was, very reluctantly withdrawn. But pursuant to the decision made in London, the National Sports Organisations of Asian countries were asked to send one or two representatives to meet at New Delhi on the 12th and 13th of February 1949, to finalise the constitution of the Asian Games Federation which was drawn up in August, 1948 in London.

MEETING IN NEW DELHI - 1949

The invitation to the meeting was favourably responded to by the National Olympic Committees, or corresponding Organisations, of the Philippines, Burma, India, and Iran. In the absence of replies from other countries, their embassies and legations in New Delhi were personally contacted by Mr. Sondhi and they promised to nominate representatives to attend the meeting.

The 12th and 13th of February 1949 are historic dates in the annals of Indian and Asian Sports. It was for the first time that representatives of as many as *nine* countries met for a Sports-conference in this country and on this continent. The only earlier meeting of this kind was in March 1934, when representatives of five countries, Palestine, Iran, Afghanistan, Ceylon, and India, met after the First Western Asiatic Games at New Delhi, to constitute a Western Asiatic Games Federation.

The following attended the conference in their capacity either as delegates of their chief National Sports Organisations, or as nominees of their Governments through their respective embassies at New Delhi:

1. H. H. Yadavindra Singh, Maharaja of Patiala (Indian Olympic Association).

2. Mr. Regino R. Ylanan (Philippines Amateur Athletic Federation).
3. Mr. U. Maung Maung Lwin (Olympic Association of Burma).
4. Mr. S. M. Moin-ul-Haq (Indian Olympic Association).
5. Mr. G. D. Sondhi (Indian Olympic Association).
6. Mr. C. de Fonseka (Observer, Nominee of Ceylon High Commissioner).
7. Sardar Ghulam Mohamed (Nominee of the Afghan Embassy).
8. Mr. A. B. Loebis (Nominee of the Indonesian Legation).
9. Major S. B. Basnyat (Nominee of the Nepalese Embassy).
10. Colonel Nur Khan (Nominee of the Pakistan High Commissioner).
11. Mr. Sonthi Dhanasunthon (Nominee of the Siamese Legation).

Iran had promised to send a representative but he was unable to attend.

THE WORK OF THE CONFERENCE

The Conference opened with a short address of welcome by H. H. the Maharaja of Patiala, who was elected Chairman of the meeting.

Messages of good wishes from the Hon'ble the Prime Minister of India, and H. E. the Ambassador from Afghanistan were read out. Both messages stressed the role of Sports in cementing friendship between the youth of nations, and wished all success to the meeting.

The Conference then proceeded to examine the draft of the constitution which had been prepared by the Sub-Committee set up in London in August 1948. The Conference set up a new Sub-Committee to examine the London-draft in detail, and to report the next day.

On the 13th of February the constitution, as presented by the Sub-Committee, was approved, with a few minor changes and it

was unanimously decided to set up an Asian Games Federation. The representatives of Afghanistan, Burma, India, Pakistan, and the Philippines signed the constitution in token of full acceptance and these five countries became the first members of the Asian Games Federation. The representatives of Ceylon, Indonesia, Nepal and Siam signed it subject to ratification by their Governments or their National Sports Associations.

The Constitution laid down that Asian Games Championships were to be held every four years, the first Championships to be held in 1950.

On behalf of the Indian Olympic Association, the Maharaja of Patiala, its President, invited the member Asian countries, and such other countries as would join the Federation later on, to the First Asian Games Championships, to be held in New Delhi in February 1950. This invitation was accepted.

PROGRAMME OF CHAMPIONSHIPS

The following games and sports were to be part of the programme of the Championships:

Athletics (track and field), Swimming and Diving, Sports in Fine Arts (on the lines of the International Olympic competitions). (Compulsory.)

Any other amateur game or sport for which at least four nations had signified their intention to enter.

The following office-holders were elected for the ensuing term:

President: H. H. Yadavindra Singh, Maharaja of Patiala (India);

Vice-President: The Hon'ble Jorge B. Vargas (Philippines);

Hony. Secretary Treasurer: Mr. G. D. Sondhi (India).

Thus ended an historic meeting and thus were laid the foundations of the Asian Games Federation, meant to bring all Asian countries together on the field of Sports.