

## New Delhi

by C. L. Mehta

*New Delhi will welcome the 86th Session of the IOC from 19th to 26th March 1983. Air-Vice Marshal Mehta, Secretary General of the Indian Olympic Association and of the Organising Committee for the IXth Asian Games, introduces our readers to his city.*



Delhi is one of the oldest as well as one of the most modern cities of the present day. The Delhi of today is not one but a conglomeration of eight cities which, at different times, were seats of the Indian empire, stretching almost 30 miles from end to end. Legend has it that Delhi was originally founded around 1200 BC by the Pandavas, the legendary heroes of the epic Mahabharat. Whatever its beginning, Delhi has seen the rise and fall of many



Empires and each of them left behind a plethora of monuments which commemorate the grandeur and glory of the bygone ages. It may be stated without exaggeration that very few cities in the world can display such a profusion of architectural styles as can Delhi

The present day Delhi is an amalgum of the glorious past and the vibrant present. Famous architectural gems lie side by side with new high-rise buildings. Over four million people live in this city representing all the races, religions and languages spoken in India.

New Delhi was planned by Sir Edwin Lutyens as an Imperial city for the British with extensive parks, vistas and avenues dappled in deep shades. The city is the epitome of India's history with its succession of glories and disasters and with its great capacity to absorb many cultures and yet retain its separate identity. Most of what you see today in New Delhi was built in the last 35 years during which India has been Independent.

The old Delhi of today was the city of Shahjahanabad built by the Mughal emperor Shahjahan. Enclosed by a rubble wall five miles in circumference with bastions, it has 14 gates. Much of the walls and several of the gates still stand. The heart of the old city, Chandni Chowk, was and is a busy commercial centre overlooking Shahjahan's citadel, the Red Fort. In this complex the Sis Ganj Gurdwara, the Kotwali, and the Jain temple at Sonehri Masjid provide nostalgic flashbacks of happenings of far-reaching importance.

The Red Fort, built on the banks of the Jamuna river was started by Shahjahan in 1639 and completed 10 years later. The red sandstone walls of the fort have seen the peak and twilight of the Mughal empire. The intricate carvings on the marble stones of exquisite beauty speak volumes about the craftsmanship of the period. Emperor Shahjahan used to sit on the fabulous Peacock throne wearing the diamond Koh-i-noor (mountain of lights) on his turban. The glory of his days is inscribed in lines of gold in one of the palace's marble walls as:

If on earth there be a place of bliss  
It is this, it is this, it is this

South of Chandni Chowk is Jama Masjid, built by Shahjahan, which is the largest mosque in India and one of the finest in the world.

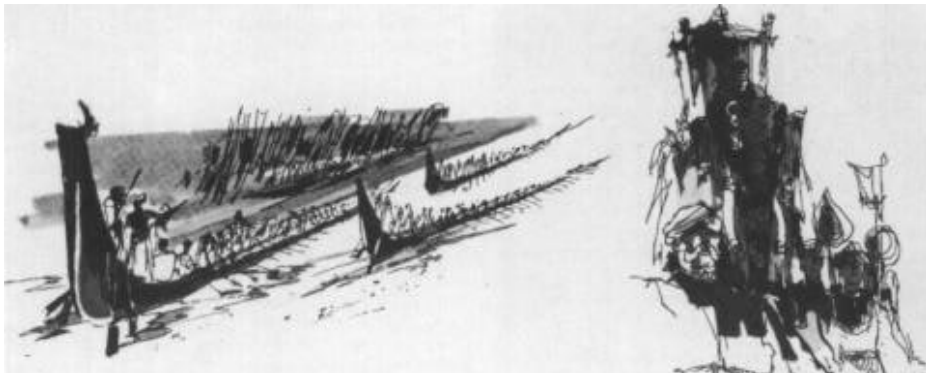
Purana Qila or the Old Fort is the site where once stood the pre-historic city of Indraprastha, the first capital of the Aryans. The tomb of emperor Humayun built by his wife Hamida Banoo Begum architecturally resembles the Taj Mahal of Agra and is said to be the forerunner to the Taj Mahal. The other important landmark is the Qutab Minar, the 234 ft high Tower of Victory started in about 1200 AD by Qutab-ud-din Aibak, founder of the Slave Dynasty and completed by his successor Iltutmish. Near the Qutab Minar stands the famous Iron Pillar, a metallurgical marvel which has remained unruined for over a thousand years. The famed Ashoka pillar carrying Emperor Ashoka's message of peace written about 2300 years ago stands at Ferozshah Kotla.

The other places to visit in the area known as New Delhi are the Jantar Mantar, an astronomical observatory constructed by Maharaja Jai Singh II of Jaipur, the majestic Gateway of India, monument for the warriors who lost their lives during World War I, the Rashtrapati Bhavan, the circular Parliament House and other buildings housing the various Government offices. The Birla Mandir symbolises the marble grandeur of the 20th century. The Connaught Circus is the main shopping centre.

The recent addition to the sky-line of Delhi is the new sports infra-structure built in connection with the IX Asian Games which began on 19th November 1982. To name a few, the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium with a seating capacity of 75,000; the Indraprastha Indoor Stadium with a seating capacity of 26,000, the largest in Asia, the Velodrome, the Talkatora Swimming Stadium, the Tughlakabad Shooting Range, etc.

A few words about the climate of Delhi. The period early November to late March is the best time to visit Delhi. During the later half of March, the daytime may be a-bit warm but the evenings and nights are pleasant and comfortable. It would be advisable for all members to bring light woollens for comfort.

A few hints for the visitors. All passengers arriving at New Delhi should have a valid passport and visa for entry into India. At the airport, tourists who do not have any dutiable



goods or unaccompanied baggage can simply walk through the 'Green Channel' while the others must go through the 'Red Channel' for customs clearance. All passengers coming via Africa, South Africa or from endemic areas are required to have valid yellow fever vaccination certificate. Members of the 86th IOC Session Organising Committee will be in attendance at the Palam Airport (New Delhi Airport) to receive the guests and see to their comfort and convey them to their place of residence.

For general information, very brief mention is made below of other places of historical and international importance located some distance away from Delhi.

- a) *Agra* : 200 km from Delhi. The world famous Taj Mahal built by emperor Shahjahan in memory of his wife, and its associated fort is located here. In addition, the monuments at Fatehpur Sikri are on the outskirts of Agra. The gateway at Fatehpur Sikri is the largest in the world.
- b) *Jaipur*: 250 km from Delhi. It is called the Pink City of India with marvellous medieval period palaces and other architectural masterpieces. The Hawa Mahal of Jaipur is famous for its exquisite beauty.

c) *Srinagar* (Kashmir) : The world famous hill resort of 'India with its famous Dal Lake, Shalimar Garden and other places of tourist interest.

d) *Bombay*: The commercial capital of the country and Hollywood of India. on the shores of the Arabian sea.

e) *Calcutta* : The capital of the British Empire before it was shifted to New Delhi in 1911. The most populous city of India.

f) *Madras*: Situated in the southern peninsula of the country on the shores of the Bay of Bengal is the doorway to the Dravidian culture and history. Temples with superb carvings and towering structures. The Shore temple at Mahabalipuram, the Marina beach and the Fort St-George are some of the monuments of importance.

g) *Goa* (Panjim): The former Portuguese colony is famous for the stretches of white sloping sands, tranquil waters and tropical climate.

C. L. M.

