



## 86th Session of the International Olympic Committee



*H. E. President Samaranch with the President of the Republic of India H. E. Zail Singh.*

### Introduction

"India the eternal, India the miracle, a land of myriad languages, religions, sects, creeds and races, as big as Europe without Russia, reaching south from Himalayan Kashmir to tropical Kerala ; India that has survived endless invasions, seven Moghul dynasties and more recently two centuries of foreign "occupation", and yet which in a quite miraculous way, remains an integrated whole, with its own kind of universality".

The 86th Session of the International Olympic Committee, held in Delhi from March 26 to March 28, was perhaps the most remarkable in the long history of the Olympic Movement.

Apart from the long agenda of work completed -the purpose of all Sessions and much of this one concerned with the final arrangements for the Games of 1984 in Sarajevo and Los

Angeles - the 86th Session was unique. It was the first held in Asia, excepting Japan. It was the first held in a so-called "Third World", so-called "developing" country. Yet from the moment they arrived at the new and elegant VIP reception lounge at Delhi Airport, members of the IOC must have been aware that this vast sub-continent, embracing the best of East and West, North and South, somehow represented a distillation of the Olympic spirit and the fundamentals of the movement,

Session headquarters was the Ashoka Hotel in the heart of New Delhi, the city planned by the British with broad, sweeping avenues, parks and gardens, and impressive monuments, the relics of centuries, all of which contrasted so strongly with Old Delhi and its frenzied, teeming street life. The Ashoka provided a perfect working environment, with its 500 rooms, extensive conference facilities,



shops, swimming pool, a wide range of services and a variety of restaurants, the whole in beautifully landscaped gardens. At the height of a Delhi spring, the gardens looked like nothing less than a beautiful saree, making this a Session of flowers and splendid colours.

In this relaxed environment, several commissions, the Executive Board, and finally the Session proper, covered a vast amount of work and made important decisions (see pages 199-217). And much of the success of the Session was due to the organisational and administrative talents of the Indian Olympic Association and everyone concerned with the management of the Session through the Special Organising Committee for the 86th Session.

The IXth Asian Games of last November, of course, had been carried off very successfully. And only a week or so before the IOC Session met, Delhi had staged the Conference of the Non-aligned Nations (NAN), with huge delegations from more than 100 countries attending, so that the conference services of the capital city had been fully stretched. Yet our Indian hosts prepared and carried through the Session with efficiency, constant politeness, and above all, smiles. Indians are a smiling people.

In the days preceeding the Session, IOC members were able to inspect the extensive sports facilities existing in Delhi — stadium, indoor sports hall, swimming pool, velodrome, etc. The Jawaharlal Nehru stadium, with 75,000 seats, was built in just 21 months by an army of imported workers 12,000 strong, who were accommodated in a camp on the site complete with two primary schools, a 24 hours medical clinic, specially arranged entertainment, and other services! One of India's greatest assets — people. In the same period of time, by some 10,000 workers, the Indraprastha indoor sports hall, was built and is almost one of the wonders of the world. With 25,000 seats, it is the third largest in the world, after the Superbowl in New Orleans and the Astrodome in Houston. A dramatic dividing curtain within minutes can convert it into two arenas each of 12,500 seats which can take totally different sports or activities simultaneously. At the swimming pool — 6000 seats — one comment was, "We shall cover it now —

we simply did not have time before the Asian Games last year".

From all of this, it is clear that with a few modifications, India has the facilities to stage a modern Olympic Games, and certainly the manpower and organisational talent. India clearly will be a strong contender for the Games of 1992, and equally clearly will become one of the most powerful Olympic voices in Asia.

In the two days following the Session, some of the IOC members were able to see something of "another" India, at Agra, and Jaipur. The Indian Olympic Association chartered an aircraft to take a party to Agra, and under the guidance of Raja Balendra Sing, President of the IOA, and other officials, an afternoon visit, then later the traditional moonlight visit, was made to the astounding Taj Mahal. The party was entertained to an outdoor buffet supper and traditional entertainment on what was "Holi", a traditional Hindu holiday which is colourful in the extreme — part of the tradition is for people to spray coloured water on each other.

The party returned to Delhi that same night, but next day flew to Jaipur, the rose-pink city, where the members were received in the City Palace by the polo-playing Colonel Bhowani Singh, son of the last Maharaja of Jaipur. Tea on the lawns of the palace gardens, peacocks and all, was a delightful reprieve and later the members and their wives were entertained in the Colonel's private apartments in the palace. Early next morning, there was a visit to the Amber Valley, with its enormous palace and fort, before the return to Delhi.

From the impressive Opening Ceremony in the auditorium of Vigyan Bhavan — the Session was declared open by the President of the Republic of India. Giani Zail Singh — to the official reception given by the same President on the closing evening in the beautiful Moghul Gardens of Rashtrapati Bhavan, the former Viceroy's palace which is now quite properly the official residence of the President of India, the 86th Session of the International Olympic Committee was in every respect memorable, and most of all for the warm hospitality of the people of Delhi.