



1000

PERCUSSIONISTS CAME FROM THE FAR CORNERS OF INDIA WITH THEIR BOOMING DRUMS TO SET THE PACE FOR A DAZZLING OPENING EVENT

2700

IS THE NUMBER OF FIREWORKS THAT SHOT OUT FROM 88 LOCATIONS ON THE ROOF OF JN STADIUM, HERALDING THE BEGINNING OF THE GAMES

I HAVE BEEN HERE SINCE JULY AND I AM LOVING THIS CITY. BUT I HAVE TO SUPPORT MY COUNTRY'S TEAMS. I HAD HEARD A LOT ABOUT THE OPENING CEREMONY AND ESPECIALLY THE HELIUM BALLOON

Laura | AN AUSTRALIAN STUDYING IN DELHI



SHORT STORY

WRONG CREDITS

The show wasn't without some heartburn. The Tree of Knowledge, which was one of the important segments of the opening ceremony, saw someone else get the credit at the end. Madhu Jain, the designer, claimed that the person responsible for music arrangement had been given acknowledgement but not the designer. Said Jain, "This is totally unbelievable...how can they ignore the person who has designed the segment!" No one from OC was available for comments

CROWD CHEERS SHEILA

The crowds were completely involved with the show and participated as the speakers came along. While CM Sheila Dikshit got a rousing welcome, Suresh Kalmadi was booed. PM Manmohan Singh also got the crowd cheering. Former President APJ Abdul Kalam waved to the crowd after his image was flashed on the big screens and there was cheering for him too

PRESIDENT FIRST

While Prince Charles may have taken precedence over the President of India at the opening ceremony, the rest of the key speakers followed protocol by addressing the President first and then the Prince

TOP COP IN THE CART

Police commissioner Y S Dabwal was himself present at the stadium and was seen moving in a golf cart on the outer periphery inside the stadium. He was being driven by venue commander at the JN Stadium, Dr Vivek Gogia

DRESS REHEARSAL

There was a pre-show before the ceremony. With all participants performing the songs composed for the Games till now. Shibani Kashyap sang a couple of her movie songs along with other singers. However, it was the Palash Sen song, 'Dilli Meri Jaan', which got the crowd grooving

AT OPENING CEREMONY SPIRITS SOAR

Rs 65-Cr Aerostat Performs Without Flaw, Becomes Star Of Spectacular Show

Rumu Banerjee | TNN

On Sunday, as the countdown to the opening ceremony started off, leading into the ascent of the Rs 38 crore aerostat into the sky, the tension was palpable. For the beleaguered organising committee (OC) of the Delhi Games 2010, the helium balloon was not only the highlight of the opening ceremony but also the herald of its success after a series of disasters. On the dot of 7pm, the balloon ascended — and so did the spirits of the thousands of spectators who had come in expecting a grand show.

From the start of the beats of the Nagadas to the final ascension of the balloon hovering at 25 meters above the ground, the aerostat set the pace



ANCIENT ART: Laser show depicts Yoga posture



Sanjay Sekhri

UP IN THE AIR: The aerostat provided breathtaking views to spectators at JN Stadium on Sunday evening

for the rest of the evening as a roar greeted the balloon. For the 60,000-odd spectators gathered in Jawaharlal Nehru stadium, the balloon ascension and the fireworks that accompanied it was like the call to start the celebrations. For many, it was also finally a paasa vasool. Said Kamini, a volunteer who looked fascinated, "The balloon looks perfect... the lights reflected are setting the mood for the show too." It wasn't just the volunteers impressed. Even as the "oohs" and "aahs" went around the press stand, spectators coming out after the ceremony unhesitatingly declared the aerostat — of course, after AR Rahman, as the soul of the show. Said Ranjana Verma, who had come with her husband to catch the show and was

sitting in one of the boxes near the stage, "The show was unbelievable! And the aerostat was completely mindblowing... the segment when the Indian Railways is showcased had such an interesting mix of images. The fireworks going off against the backdrop of the canvas when the flowers and other images are on was particularly interesting."

Used as a canvas to showcase the theme of the ceremony — the culture of India, the balloon formed the backdrop for the show. From images of the Mahatma to the various asanas of Yoga, every image seemed to enhance the spectacle taking place on the stage. Used for the first time as an entertainment segment of a ceremony, the aerostat — with dimensions of

40mX80mX12m, was especially appreciated as it had a 360 degree projection surface. Manufactured by Per Lindstrand and designed by Mark Fisher, the underbelly of mirrors added to the sense of drama.

The helium balloon has been in the forefront of a series of controversies ever since it was conceptualised. Brought to India for an astounding Rs 38 crore, the balloons accompanying supports like panels and staff brought the cost up to a huge Rs 65 crore plus. The ideal weather conditions that the prop needs were also a black mark, especially with the unforeseen amount of rain that the city saw this year.

But then, all is well that ends well. Especially for the OC.

Guides failed to show way

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: While the opening ceremony dazzled Delhi, for spectators trying to reach JN Stadium there were plenty of problems. For many, the real ordeal began outside the stadium. The 25,000-strong security could not handle the surging crowds and there were several stampede-like situations. Luckily, there were no reports of serious injury.

Said Rita Chawla, a spectator, "As soon as the gates were opened, a strong crowd of nearly 1,000 people pushed us inside. My children suffered injuries. No one was moving inside and it was really a bad experience after we had to walk nearly a kilometre from the Jungpura Metro station." Thousands of spectators had problems getting to the appropriate gate for entering the stadium. Volunteers, who had no clue about the location of the stadium's 18 gates, sent people in different directions. Security personnel around the stadium and the metro station added to the confusion.

Said Shanti R, a resident of Kalkaji, who had taken the Metro and got off at Jor Bagh station as per the announcements in the train. "After I came out the station, security personnel and volunteers sent me on a completely different direction. I walked past almost all the gates of the stadium before reaching my gate."

The location of the only gate which most volunteers seemed to be certain of was no. 14. Most directions were given via that gate even in cases where it meant a long walk around the venue. What added to the problem was that the security personnel had made gate 14 out of bounds for all except those who had tickets for that gate. So, at the Mathura Road left turn leading to CGO complex, a large number of spectators were seen arguing with policemen to be allowed into gate 14.

"I had to reach gate 6. None of the volunteers from whom I would ask for directions had any clue. Enthusiasm is fine but you need information too for this kind of work," said Deepayan Chatterjee, a Malviya Nagar resident. Such were the numbers that the cops at the outer ring decided to give frisking a slip and allowed spectators to go straight to the second security check. There, however, none of the card readers for checking accreditation batches were found to be working.

A senior police officer, however, denied there were any lapses in the security process. "There are 18 gates and we have posted security personnel who allow entry after proper checking and frisking," he said.

CWG gets postal dept stamp

New Delhi: The Indian postal department has brought out a special stamp to commemorate the opening ceremony of the 19th edition of the Commonwealth Games that kickstarted in the capital on Sunday.

A fully-operational post office has also come up in the Village premises. Sandwiched between a row of shops in the International Zone the post office, with its own pin code 110090, seems to be attracting good business.

"If it is a village it ought to have its own post office and the brand new Commonwealth Games Village here is no exception," said an official.

Having opened on September 16, the post office which offers facilities such as speed and registered post as well as ordinary mail, is also selling a variety of stamps in different sizes.

These have, according to officials, become popular among the athletes, who want to take home something from Delhi. "People are very excited about the post office and are buying many stamps and other souvenirs from here," said the official.

Magie Lynes, an official of the England team said, "It is very useful to have



Sanjay Sekhri

HOME AWAY FROM HOME: Games Village has its own provision store and post office

a post office in the Village. Everybody wants to send something home."

LIFE IN VILLAGE

She said she has been sending colourful postcards and letters to friends and relatives.

"One athlete — a shooter — even shipped across a part of his gun. Ini-

tially, he was sceptical as to whether we could deliver it, but we wrapped the part carefully and have couriered it to Italy," said the official.

Generally, the host countries of the Commonwealth Games as well as some competing nations celebrate the Games philatelically. PTI

Games on the canvas: Artists capture event in all its colours

Neelam Raaj | TNN

New Delhi: The finest athletes raise sport to the level of art but who says artists can't have a little fun and games? In a new show that is a cultural complement to the Commonwealth Games, 108 artists and photographers from across the country do just that.

The Games may have generated more than its share of controversies, but as the curtain goes up on one of the biggest (certainly the most expensive) sporting events the country has hosted, it's perhaps apt that the art showcased at Lalit Kala Akademi reminds viewers that it's time sports takes centre stage. V Ramesh's work, 'The Giant leap', represents the never-say-die spirit of Delhi pole-vaulting over layers of history to claim its place on the global stage.

The Baroda-based artist says he started the work when cleanliness and corruption hadn't hit the headlines. "By the time I finished it, everything had gone wrong," says Ramesh whose painting shows a lithe athlete vaulting over 17th century Delhi. "Delhi has been ransacked so many times but it always bounces back and that was the spirit I wanted to capture on canvas."

In keeping with the curator Rupika Chawla's brief to stick to the celebratory mood, most of the work is upbeat, though many like Apurva Desai map the capital's changing urban landscape. Delhi-based artist Vibha Galhotra's 'Work in Progress' shows how CWG construction has affected the common man but the strongest comment comes from Ved Prakash Gupta.

Using his trademark "weapon of wit", Gupta unmasks the political games behind the Games. His work — a combination of painting and sculpture — is based on a Hindi saying: 'Rajneeti aisa khel hai jise khelne wale mein taqat honi chahiye' (Politics is a game that only the powerful can play). It shows a clutch of bureaucrats and politicians wearing Shera masks running towards the seat of power. "They aren't scrambling to save the country's prestige but to please their higher-ups," explains Gupta. His satirical masterpiece — instead of the usual downward swoop, Shera's moustache curves up. "Though these officials tarnished the image of the Games, there is little guilt," says Gupta from Bihar, who says he was moved by the plight of labourers from his state when he visited Delhi.

In this work, Gupta's sculpture of the common man stands on the fringes, holding a Shera mask. This is a man born in independent India who has seen and felt proud of the country's phenomenal growth trajectory. "But now he's unsure whether to put on the mask and celebrate or stay an outsider".

Besides Gupta, the show titled 'Art Celebrates 2010' displays work by 108 artists like the late Manjit Bawa, to Raghu Rai and younger artists such as Mithu Sen and the duo, Thukral and



GAMES & ART: A detail from a work of Ved Prakash Gupta shows a group of politicians and bureaucrats wearing Shera masks running towards the seat of power; (below) The Giant Leap by V Ramesh that represents the never-say-die spirit of Delhi



Tagra. While some have chosen Delhi as their subject, sports is the muse for others.

Most Delhi residents who head for the stadium from this week (or camp in front of their LCDs) to watch feats of

Using his trademark 'weapon of wit', V P Gupta unmasks the political games behind the Games. His work — a combination of painting and sculpture — is based on a Hindi saying: 'Rajneeti aisa khel hai jise khelne wale mein taqat honi chahiye'

athletic prowess will probably be unaware that sport and art have a connection that goes back a long way. In the first half of the 20th century, the modern Olympics also included art compe-

titions. The dream of uniting sport and art — as they were once paired in the original Greek Olympiads — was in fact central to the mission of Baron Pierre de Coubertin, the godfather of the Games. The goal was to reunite a long-divorced couple Muscle and Mind, the baron loftily announced to an organizing committee in an early attempt to get the idea off the ground. But while the first athletic competitions got under way in Athens in 1896, it was not until the Stockholm Games in 1912 that medals would be given for architecture, sculpture, painting, music and literature.

Several artists too, have been inspired by sport. Goya was a bullring aficionado while Andy Warhol created portraits of 10 of the most famous sports stars, from Pele and Mohammad Ali to Chris Evert and skater Dorothy Hamill.

Art Celebrates! 2010 will be on view from 1-15 October at the Lalit Kala Akademi, Ferozeshah Road, New Delhi. neelam.raaj@timesgroup.com

Prince Charles visits Village

New Delhi: "Fantastic" and "really good" — this is how most of the athletes described their stay at the Commonwealth Games Village to Prince Charles and his wife Camilla Parker Bowles when the royal couple visited the sprawling complex on Sunday.

"We told him that the facilities here are really fantastic and that we are enjoying our stay to the fullest," said wrestler Zoe Smith of Britain. Britain was among the few countries which was severely critical of the condition at the Games Village, dubbed earlier as "filthy" and "unlivable".

Wheel-chair bound Taniel Davis of Welsh, who will participate in the seated shotput competition, during his brief interaction with the royal couple also shared his "warm" experience. "He asked about many things including the facilities. We told him that the facilities here are really good. I am en-



BEST FOOT FORWARD: Prince Charles with athletes on Sunday

joying every moment of my stay here," he said.

Davis's team-mate Anthony Hughes echoed a similar view and said the media had portrayed a very different picture of the Village. "We told Prince Charles that the Village is really fabulous."

Trinidad and Tobago's Ayana Alexandra, who will participate in the women's triple jump event, said the facilities at the Village are best among the international events she has participated in so far.

"All the facilities are real-

ly fabulous. We told Prince Charles that we are liking the Village," she said.

The Village also received a rave review from team official of Trinidad and Tobago Edwin Skinner, who has participated in many other previous Games. He said he told Prince Charles the "facilities are absolutely fantastic."

The Village is spread over an area of 63.5 hectares and has all basic facilities like postal services, a bank, ATMs, discotheque, bar, cafeterias, handicraft shops, a gym and shops selling wooden sculptures among others. At present, over 6,000 athletes from 71 countries are staying in the Village.

For the first time in the history of the Commonwealth Games, a training area for the athletes has been set up within the Village premises. Athletes are able to train in four sports — athletics, aquatics, weightlifting and wrestling. PTI

Photos: Rajesh Mehra