

India makes colourful bid for 2010 Commonwealth Games

Indian Minister for Youth Affairs and Sports, Vikram Verma led a high-powered delegation to London from May 29 to June 1 for the formal presentation of India's bid for the 2010 Commonwealth Games. India, which has never hosted the Commonwealth Games, is one of the two bidders for this prestigious sporting event. Along with New Delhi, the city of Hamilton in Canada is the other contender.

In an impressive ceremony at the Commonwealth Secretariat on May 30, the minister and Suresh Kalmadi, MP and President of the Indian Olympic Association, jointly presented the bid to H.R.H. the Earl of Wessex, President of the Commonwealth Games Federation. The High Commissioner of India, Ronen Sen, was also present at the occasion.

Following the presentation, a video film on India's bid and a cultural programme featuring a troupe playing the traditional drums of India accompanied by Indian girls in colourful attire was presented by the Indian delegation. A decision on the bids by India and Canada is due to be taken by the Commonwealth Games Federation in November 2003.

The sports minister was accompanied by a high-level delegation consisting of Vijai Kapoor, Lt. Governor of Delhi; Prof. V.K. Malhotra, MP and President of the All India Council of Sports; Shri Rajiva Srivastava, Secretary, Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports; Shekhar Dutt, Director General of the Sports Authority of India; Randhir Singh, Secretary



A troupe of Bhangra performers entertain the audience during India's bid for the 2010 Commonwealth Games.

General of the Indian Olympic Association and other officials.

To mark India's bid, Verma and Kalmadi hosted a reception and dinner at the Hilton hotel, Park Lane, on May 30, where senior officials of the British and Canadian Commonwealth Games Associations and members of the Indian

community were treated to a colourful cultural programme.

Welcoming the guests, the minister underlined India's strong commitment to the promotion of sports, and expressed the hope that the 2010 Commonwealth Games would be awarded to India in recognition of both its sporting

attainments and its rapidly improving sporting infrastructure.

India's bid for the 2010 Commonwealth Games comes in the wake of India's best ever performance at the Manchester Commonwealth Games in 2002 where it secured the third position, winning 72 medals.

India holds oil and gas road show in London

The bidding process for the fourth round of the New Exploration Licensing Policy (NELP-IV) was launched in New Delhi last month. To present the opportunities that India offers in this sector to British and global companies, Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas Ram Naik was in London for an impressive road show held on June 5-6.

The road show was held at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel in Knightsbridge. Eighty-three oil and gas exploration and production companies attended the function, including majors such as the BG Group, BHP, BP, Cairn Energy, Hardy Exploration, Itochu, ENI, Tullow Oil and Saudi Aramco.

The level of interest surpassed that experienced in 2002 for NELP-III, no doubt spurred by the fact that past successful bidders have struck significant reserves, including one that has been billed as the largest discovery of 2002 anywhere in the world.

The fiscal incentives offered to companies under NELP-IV are very attractive, and include a 7-year tax holiday, zero cess or customs duty and many more incentives.

A Data Viewing Centre has been set up at the High Commission of India office in Aldwych. Detailed geo-scientific and technical data is available here to facilitate investors. The closing date for bids under NELP-IV is September 30.

An online oral history of Britain's Indian community

Veteran actor Saeed Jaffrey recently launched a new website www.historytalking.com, an online oral history of Britain's Indian community.

The website aims to create a valuable online educational resource of oral history. It invites people to volunteer information, eyewitness accounts and life experiences about some of the socially and educationally relevant events, social trends and cultural themes.

This community initiative is supported by the Experience Corps, a government-funded national organisation promoting voluntary work among senior citizens. The Experience Corps has appointed Jaffrey as cultural ambassador. He will also be promoting the culture of voluntary work in Britain's Indian community.

In a programme called 'History talking with Saeed Jaffrey' former BBC radio editor and founder of historytalking.com, Vijay Rana interviewed the actor at the Bhavan Centre on June 6.

Jaffrey talked about his life and work. As an eight-year-old kid his first dramatic role was that of Dara Shikoh in an Aligarh School. "Perhaps that's how I acquired my liberal instincts," said Jaffrey. Jaffrey told how as a young All India Radio reporter he managed to do a brief interview with India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru when he was leaving



Saeed Jaffrey, right, with Maggie Semple the chief executive of the Experience Corps.

for America. Many years later Nehru was surprised to see Jaffrey at a theatre in Broadway, New York, where Jaffrey was playing Professor Godbole in *A Passage to India*.

With the help of some rare photographs and film clips Jaffrey talked about his encounters with Raj Kapoor, Satyajit Ray and Ravi Shankar.

Jaffrey's interview can be listened on historytalking.com. "In this age of the World Wide Web, you don't need to read history, you can even listen to it," says Vijay Rana.

The website is unearthing some remarkable stories about the evolution of

the Indian community in the U.K. such as the fact that Nasser Hussain was not the first man of Indian origin to lead a national English team. It was, in fact, a Sikh, Sutinder Khehar, who captained the English hockey team in the Champion's Trophy tournament held in Mumbai in the early eighties.

Another interesting account is that of an Indian woman Raksha Tandon, who during the sixties was not allowed to manage English staff while wearing a sari. She was sacked before she could begin her lucrative managerial job only because she refused to abandon her sari in favour of English dress.