



A Passage to India

Photos by Graeme McAlpine and James French



An introduction to our Delhi Commonwealth Games special feature, by GTC Chairman Graeme McAlpine who worked as a camera supervisor on the lawn bowls

Last summer I was delighted to be elected GTC Chairman for the next two years. The GTC Council is working to ensure that the Guild can grow and change along with our industry and profession. Part of the GTC's current 'business plan' is to encourage international membership. I am always pleased to have the opportunity to

promote our thriving, successful organisation to other working cameramen abroad. What better opportunity to do so than the recent XIX Commonwealth Games in Delhi? The coverage of these Games was a massive operation and gave many cameramen from the UK and elsewhere an opportunity to visit India



▲ A wonderful opportunity to meet and work with cameramen from India and other countries

and meet their local counterparts. To capture a flavour of the stories and experiences of working on this major event, we have collected together a selection of personal accounts of Delhi 2010, which you will find throughout this edition of Zerb.

Pre-departure concerns

Those making the trip to Delhi could be forgiven for a sense of apprehension. News of the build-up to the Games focused on controversy and problems. There were allegations of corruption, abuse of labour agreements and reports of facilities being far from ready. Two weeks before the start of the Games, pictures emerged of the athletes' village showing it to be 'filthy and unfit for human habitation'. Several teams delayed their arrival and some threatened to pull out altogether. On top of this, a bridge under construction near the main venue

collapsed injuring many labourers, and the next day there was more bad news when the ceiling of the weightlifting venue fell in.

The large contingent of UK cameramen contracted for the coverage was mainly due to the major involvement of British company SIS LIVE who had been awarded the contract to deliver television production facilities and services by Doordarshan, a subsidiary of Prasar Bharati, the Broadcasting Corporation of India, which had been appointed Host Broadcaster for the Games. SIS LIVE incorporates the former outside broadcast division of the BBC and has more than 70 years' experience of covering major OB events.

Complex organisation

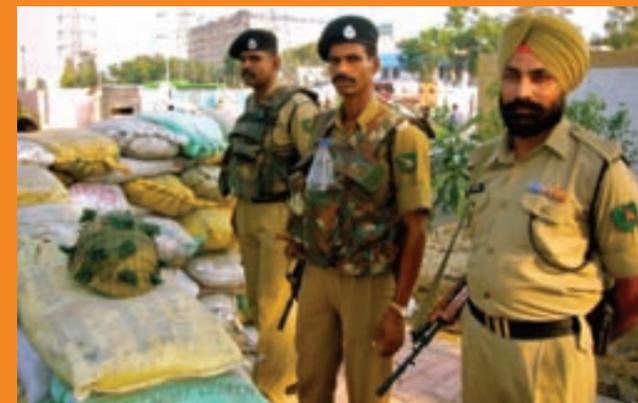
The scale of the Games was huge. It was the largest multi-sport event ever undertaken in India, involving some 6500 athletes and officials from

With very long working days expected of crews, on top of which travel to venues could add a couple of hours to the day, access to reliably clean and appetising food became a major issue



▲ Ensuring a regular supply of appetising and hygienic crew meals proved a challenge for managers

SIS LIVE was to employ over 1000 technicians, production crew and support staff at 12 venues, as well as for coverage of the spectacular opening and closing ceremonies



▲ Security men, sandbags and guns everywhere you looked!

71 nations competing across 17 different sports. SIS LIVE was to employ over 1000 technicians, production crew and support staff at 12 different venues, as well as for coverage of the spectacular opening and closing ceremonies. Of these, some 450 staff came direct from the UK, while the rest were from another 36 countries from all corners of the world, including Australia, Canada, Singapore, Malaysia and Denmark. The coverage involved 40 production areas, multiple OB set-ups, over 350 camera channels, 100 HD long lenses, as well as a range of specialist production and camera equipment, the operation and placement of which is described in some of our accounts.

Before we even arrived, months of work had already taken place, with the planning kicking off as soon as the contract was awarded in October 2009. Working with SIS LIVE, health and safety consultants 1st Option Safety Services had already

meticulously reced all the venues and prepared risk assessments for every aspect of the operation.

Safety standards

One of the challenges was trying to ensure safety standards in line with those expected in the UK in a country where similar standards, although legislated for, are often not achieved due to poor compliance and enforcement. As it was, crew members still encountered work practices and equipment that left quite a bit to be desired on the safety front (see the scary looking ladder in James French's account on page 23).

Among the issues that had to be addressed was the safe and optimum positioning of cameras and mountings, including a whole raft of specialised cameras, such as Plungecam and other application-specific cameras utilised in the aquatics area as described by Lawrence Hall.