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The 'Houses' of Delhi – Princely Embassies in an Imperial Capital

[THREAD]

Visitors to Delhi are familiar with the ubiquitous 'Houses' – Hyderabad House, Patiala House et al. But most are unfamiliar with their history. Who built them & why?

A short expose for the curious few.. <https://t.co/c8vmy2sDaY>



The more famous of the 'Houses' are those perched around the India Gate – Hyderabad, Baroda, Patiala, Jaipur and Bikaner.

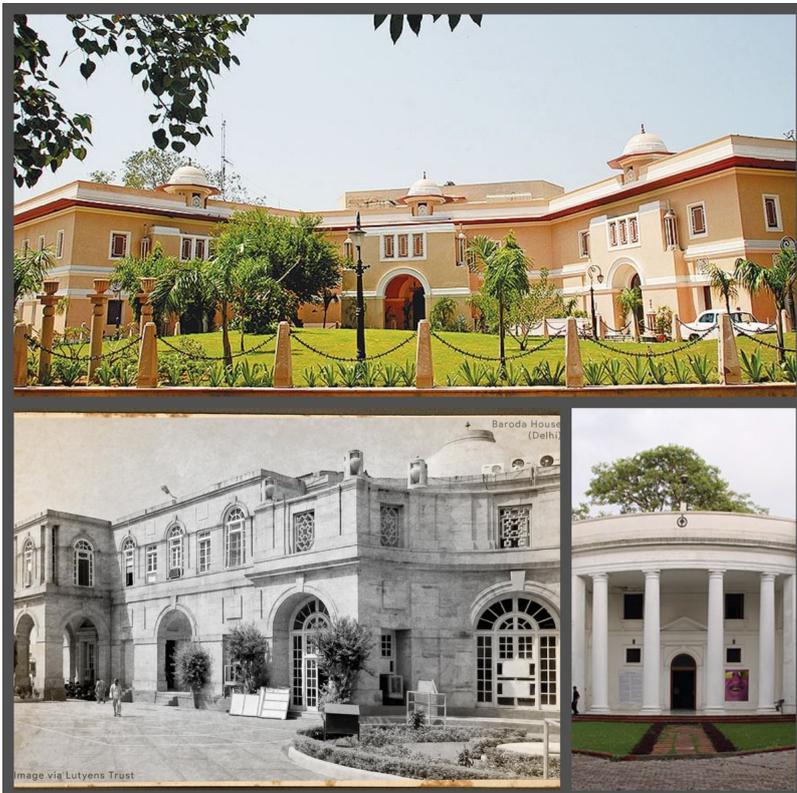
There are several others dotting the leafy roads of Lutyens Delhi – Dholpur and Mandi to name a few.

2/n <https://t.co/QKf8kxJe9R>



As the names would suggest to any reader of history, these Houses represented the 'Provinces' or more accurately the 'Princely States' that existed pre-independence. In reality, these were the 'Embassies' of princely states at the British imperial Capital at New Delhi.

3/n <https://t.co/lkg0lj7D9h>



In 1911, British decided to shift capital from Calcutta to New Delhi. In later years, plots were allotted to princely states around the Viceroy House, de facto Embassies to embellish the imperial Capital. Total 34 plots; location & size approx. to the status of resp States.

4/n

Most Princely Houses were built between 1920 and 1940. Some were never built, some were built but never used. Close to and post-independence, most were re-appropriated by the Govt and now serve different purposes.

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Hyderabad House

The most stately of them all, the HH was designed by Lutyens for the Nizam and has been featured in movies such as Gandhi and Sangam. Graceful on Ashoka Road on India Gate, it is today owned by @meaindia and used for State functions of the Prime Minister.

6/n <https://t.co/gKlqjpkFq8>



Baroda House

Also designed by Lutyens for Maharaja Gaekwad of Baroda, this mansion is simpler in style but equally graceful. It stands on the India Gate circle on Kasturba Gandhi road and today houses the office of Northern Railways.

7/n <https://t.co/CJQNn4IPk5>



Patiala House

Built by Maharajas Bhupinder (of the Patiala Necklace fame) & Yadindra Singh, this building served for some time as the office of the @WHO, was the venue for the historic meeting that led to the 1st Asian Games, and today hosts the noisy Delhi District Court.

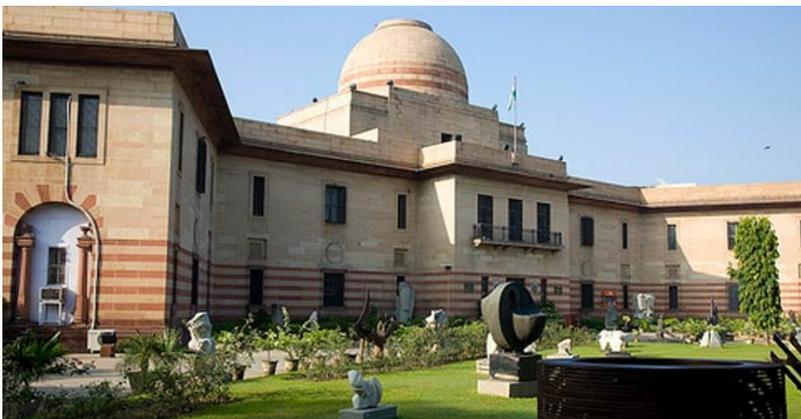
8/n <https://t.co/HPusXwSHz1>



Jaipur House

Given to Jaipur state on gratis basis in exchange for land that was acquired to build Lutyens Delhi. Designed by Blomfield brothers, today it houses the National Gallery for Modern Art.

9/n <https://t.co/jWsm2p8pWR>



Bikaner House

Built for the Royal House of Bikaner by Charles Blomfield, this was the site for many meetings of Chamber of Princes pre-Independence. Today known more for Rajasthan Tourism office and buses leaving for that state.

10/n <https://t.co/ptYzvW0ZOA>



Other Delhi Houses -1

Dholpur House

On Shahjahan Road, now famously the home of the UPSC.

Bahawalpur House

On Bhagwan Das Road, home to the first US Embassy in Delhi. Now hosts the National School of Drama.

11/n <https://t.co/xjADtpyzYM>



Other Delhi Houses -2

Cochin House

Initially the residence of Sardar Sobha Singh, it hosted the ILO when it first started operations in India. Presently under the Kerala Govt.

Darbhangra House

On Mansingh Road, it today houses the offices of MHA.

12/n <https://t.co/HN9IQfbi9>



Other Delhi Houses -3

Faridkot House

On Copernicus Marg, it briefly hosted Canada High Commission. Today the seat of the NGT.

Mandi House

One of the more famous Delhi landmarks, this palace does not exist anymore & is today the site of Doordarshan, India's national TV.

13/n <https://t.co/aPdD7CnDgR>



Other Delhi Houses -4

Jind House

This estate served as the first Chinese Embassy in India and is now part of Punjab Bhavan.

Kashmir House

The State of then Kashmir was among the '21-gun status' states that did not get a place on India Gate. Today it hosts offices of MOD.

14/n

Other Delhi Houses -5

Travancore House

Also called Hathiwali Kothi, located on KG Marg and was the location of the first Embassy of USSR in Delhi.

Kanika House

Today the residence of the Polish Ambassador, this small site on Tilak Marg was briefly home to BR Ambedkar.

15/n <https://t.co/4PJvte3ahS>



Princely Houses were an inalienable part of the 'New' Delhi landscape and were witness to the tumultuous period of the end of the British Empire and birth of the Indian nation.

They stand as a bridge between past & present in the architectural landscape of modern Delhi.

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Over several years in Delhi, learning about the 'Houses' has been an abiding personal interest.

This task has been made easier now with the publication of 'Princely Palaces in New Delhi' by Sumanta Bhowmick. An excellent contribution to the history of this forgotten era.

17/n <https://t.co/IGZ1F02Loc>

PRINCELY PALACES

IN NEW DELHI

SUMANTA K BHOWMICK



Trivia

Most Princely Houses were constructed by Sdr Sobha Singh, father of Khushwant Singh. Contrary to popular imagination, only two were designed by Edwin Lutyens, architect of Delhi.

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