

# **Play Fair at the Olympics: India Campaign**

## *Olympics Torch Rally Marred by Arrests of Garment Workers and Trade Union Leaders*



Photograph: J. John

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**Play Fair at the Olympics: India Campaign**  
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## *Olympics Torch Rally Marred by Arrest of Garment Workers and Trade Union Leaders*

About 50 Garment and sportswear workers from NOIDA, Gurgaon, Faridabad, Tirupur, Mumbai and Delhi along with leaders of trade unions were forcibly taken under custody by the Police.

The arrest happened when they were en-

### **Objective of the Play Fair at the Olympics: India Campaign**

In the given situation and using the opportunity of Athens Olympics 2004, the Play Fair at the Olympics: India Campaign intends to bring together various stakeholders who are working for the improvement of conditions of labour, in the garment and sportswear industry, on one platform. It intends to raise a societal consciousness on workers' rights in the garment and sportswear industry in India. The campaign also intends to sensitise employers on the need to have fair labour standards and ensure that the rights of the workers are protected.

### **Perspective**

We emphasise that Play Fair at the Olympics: India Campaign is not intended as a campaign against Olympics.

The campaign should not be used either by buyers or any other agency to propose or advocate boycott of goods. Rather, we intend to encourage preference for observance of labour standards, and a consistent and long-term collaboration among various stakeholders.

The Olympics Campaign is a global campaign, taking place simultaneously in different countries across the globe where production for the Olympics takes place. We would like to utilise the occasion to bring forward the issue of guaranteeing basic rights to the workers involved in garment production in India.

We would also like to use this occasion to bring before the government and enterprises the rightful concerns of garment workers.



Photograph: J. John

route to Humayun's Tomb where they were expected to assemble for a peaceful demonstration. At Humayun's Tomb, a historical monument in New Delhi Olympics torch runners were going to be greeted with a cultural programme organized by the Delhi Government.



Photograph: J. John

About 150 workers started moving in a peaceful convoy from BTR Bhawan, Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg at 2.15 pm. However police mid-way stopped their vehicles from proceeding to the venue.

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They then started to march towards the venue but were taken under custody at 3.15 pm from Bhartiya Vidya Bhawan at Kasturba Gandhi Marg.



Photograph: J. John

Among those arrested were Shri R A Mital, Secretary HMS, Mr. D L Sachdev, Secretary, AITUC and Ms Sindhu Menon, Correspondent of Labour File.

They were kept under custody the whole day till the torch reached in the 'safe hands' of the corporate sponsors and were released after 9.30 pm.



Photograph: J. John

Incidentally, the Olympics Torch relay in India was taken over completely by Coca Cola and Samsung, the official sponsors of the event. Torchbearers were decided entirely by them.



Photograph: J. John

These workers were making use of the Olympics Torch Rally to highlight the extreme exploitative situations in which they work. The repressive reaction from the state came despite declaring at various places that the campaign did not intend a protest or demonstration against the Olympics Torch rally.

The aim is to sensitise the public about the conditions of work in the garment and sportswear industry (See box).



Photograph: J. John

Play Fair at the Olympics: India Campaign is jointly organised by central trade unions: AITUC, CITU, HMS, INTUC, UTUC, AICCTU, NTUI, and organisations working on labour issues: CEC and SAVE. It is a campaign against the exploitation of workers in the garments and sportswear industry. It envisions defending the rights of workers: right to organise, living wages, social security, legal working hours and safe working conditions in these sectors. The campaign is a part of the global *Play Fair at the Olympics* campaign, launched by Clean Clothes Campaign (CCC), Oxfam International (OI) and Global Unions, in the context of the Athens Olympics, 2004.

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## Workers and Trade Unions at Humayun's Tomb

Meanwhile some workers and trade union leaders managed to escape the police and reached Humayun's Tomb. But they were prohibited from entering the premises of the cultural programme and were forcibly put behind a police barricade. This was done despite repeated attempts of explaining to the police officials that the demonstration is a peaceful one without involving any slogan shouting, just to distribute brochures and handouts.



Among them were Mr. P.K. Ganguly and Indrani Mazumdar, CITU, Mr. Rajiv Dimri, AICCTU, Mr. P.K. Shahi, AIFTU, Mr. A. Aloysius, SAVE, Pallavi Mansingh and J. John, CEC.

## Morning Session on June 10, 2004

Prior to this, on June 10, a national meeting was held at CITU Office, BTR Bhawan in New Delhi.

Here it was decided that the rally carrying a model of the Olympics Torch would begin from Tirupur on July 19, 2004 and reach New Delhi by July 31, 2004. It will pass through the key centers of export garment production in India: Chennai, Bangalore, Mumbai, Surat, Kolkata and Ludhiana.



The meeting was addressed by Mr. M.K. Pandhe, President, CITU, Mr. P.K. Ganguly, Secretary, CITU, R.A. Mital, Secretary, HMS, Mr. D.L. Sachdev, Secretary, AITUC, Mr. Rajiv Dimri, Secretary, AICCTU, Gautam Modi, NTUI, A. Aloysius, Director, SAVE and J. John, Executive Director, CEC.

## Press Conference on June 9, 2004

On June 9, the Organising Committee of the Play Fair at the Olympics: India Campaign released an appeal on the conditions of workers in the garment and sportswear industry, at a press conference.

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Releasing the appeal organisers of the campaign demand that: a) rights of the workers to organise, living wage, social security, legal working hours and safe working conditions should be protected by the government and the employers. They urged the government to strengthen the enforcement mechanisms and bring all workers in the garment and sportswear industry under the legislative framework. b) A mechanism should be devised to establish the corporate social accountability of the principle buyer/retailer. Purchasing practices of brands and buyers that encourage suppliers to adopt exploitative employment conditions should be checked c) institutional mechanisms like an all India Board for Garment Workers is the need of the hour and d) government should evolve a procurement policy of garments, sportswear and sports goods considering fair labour standards. They stressed that the campaign is not intended against Olympics. Rather, they intend to encourage preference for observance of labour standards, and a consistent and long-term collaboration among various stakeholders.

The appeal was handed over to the Indian Olympic Association on the morning of June 9, 2004.



Photograph: J. John

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## **Play Fair at the Olympics: India Campaign**

### **An appeal by Play Fair at the Olympics: India Campaign for protection of labour rights in the garment and sportswear industry**

#### **Play Fair at the Olympics Campaign**

Play Fair at the Olympics: India Campaign is jointly organised by central trade unions: AITUC, CITU, HMS, INTUC, UTUC, AICCTU, NTUI, and organisations working on labour issues: CEC, CIVIDEP and SAVE. It is a campaign against the exploitation of workers in the garments and sportswear industry. It envisions defending the rights of workers: right to organise, living wages, social security, legal work hours and safe working conditions in these sectors.

The campaign is a part of the global *Play Fair at the Olympics* campaign, launched by Clean Clothes Campaign (CCC), Oxfam International (OI) and Global Unions, in the context of the Athens Olympics, 2004. It brings together trade unions and labour rights organisations from all over the world. The Asian campaign has identified the empowerment of workers as the most important and effective tool in improving working conditions and wage levels in the garment industry in Asia. Therefore it focuses on maximisation of workers' involvement to push multinational buyers and retailers and manufacturers to improve working conditions in the garment and sportswear industry in Asia.

#### **Garment and Sports Wear Industry in India**

A large part of the production in the garment and sportswear sector in India is for exports. In the year 1999-2000 export of ready-made garments accounted for Rs 20649 cr, in 2000-01 this rose to Rs. 25478 cr. and in 2001-02 it declined to Rs 23877 cr. Hence a clear increase in the garment exports can be seen in the year 2000 which is also the year when the last Olympic games were held in Sydney.

Garment manufacturing in India is one of the most prominent economic activities both in terms of industrial output as well as employment generation. In India it provides employment to over 3.5 million people. It is also one of those few sectors of India's economy where employment has been growing. However we see that this growth of employment has taken place under very adverse and insecure conditions.

Garment and Sportswear industry falls both under the organized and the un-organized sector. There are numerous constitutional provisions and legislations

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that bear a direct relevance to workers in this industry. These include the fundamental right to equality and freedom to form associations and unions. Some of the important legislations of the Government of India for workers are: Minimum Wages Act, Factories' Act, Workmen's Compensation Act, Maternity Benefit Act, The Employees State Insurance Act, Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, Contract Labour (Regulation & Abolition) Act, and Inter-State Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, Child Labour (Regulation and Prohibition) Act. Besides, India is a signatory to the UN Declaration on Human Rights and has ratified most of the core ILO Conventions.

However, most rather all of these provisions and laws have not been implemented in the garments and sportswear industry. Little attention is paid even to minimum wages, hours of work, training, working conditions, and occupational safety and health. Low levels of awareness in terms of their rights, benefits or occupational hazards make the condition of the labour worse.

### **Objective of the Olympics Campaign**

In the given situation and using the opportunity of Athens Olympics 2004, the Play Fair at the Olympics: India Campaign intends to bring together various stakeholders who are working for the improvement of conditions of labour, in the garment and sportswear industry, on one platform. It intends to raise a general societal consciousness on workers' rights in the garment and sportswear industry in India. The campaign also intends to sensitise employers on the need to have fair labour standards and ensure that the rights of the workers are protected.

### **Perspective**

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## Demands

1. While we recognise that the garment and sportswear industry in India has a huge potential and it is important for it to grow and prosper, we demand that this should not happen at the cost of the rights of the workers. The industry, employers and government should protect rights of the workers: right to organise, living wage, social security, legal working hours and safe working conditions. We urge the government to strengthen the enforcement mechanisms and to bring all garment and sportswear workers under the legislative framework.
2. A mechanism should be devised to establish the Corporate Social Accountability of the principle buyer/retailer at all levels of the supply chain. Purchasing practices of brands and buyers that encourage suppliers to adopt exploitative employment practices should be checked.
3. We believe that institutional mechanisms such as an All India Board for Garment Workers to look into issues like employment regulation and social security for workers is the need of the hour.
4. Government should evolve a procurement policy of garments, sportswear and sports goods considering fair labour standards.

Yours Sincerely

D.L. Sachdev  
Secretary, AITUC

P.K. Ganguly  
Secretary, CITU

R.A. Mital  
Secretary, HMS

Chandidas Sinha  
Secretary, INTUC

Abani Roy  
UTUC

Rajiv Dimri  
Secretary, AICCTU

Ashim Roy  
NTUI

J. John  
Executive Director, CEC

A. Aloysius  
Director, SAVE

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## Press Clippings



The Hindu on June 10, 2004



Indian Express on June 10, 2004

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# Flame of pride, route of torch-er

By Pranjan Roy  
Times News Network

New Delhi: The biggest threat to the flame as it was being lit in the sky was not from the ground, but from the skies above. Weeks worried that rain would spoil the ceremony. Eventually the skies cleared and the flame went ahead unimpeded. But out of 6,600 people who had gathered for the ceremony were made aware that they were living in a city petrified of terrorist attacks. They were specially chosen and screened by commandos to had to pass through metal detectors.

As New Delhi prepares to joyfully welcome that 700 gram torch, there's both the shadow of terrorism and terrorism. Few people in the capital will be able to see anywhere close to the torch relay, less they had planned well ahead to spend the day on India



No special handover in Beijing.

Gate lawns or the Qutab Minar, rain or shine. The safest security handover is seclusion and Delhi police has chosen that route relegating all those who wanted to share in the pride to remain besieged bystanders. And of course, the Delhi Police advisory on traffic reads like a recipe for chaos. Nobody is making a case that the torch-bearers should be

out there dodging busline buses and maniacal rickshaw drivers, but the logic of parading the flame through the city for more than six hours is in a way travesty to the symbolism of the Olympic flame.

Given the complex topography of the city, why can't things be made simpler. Do the route from Rashtrapati Bhawan to National Stadium. Flood the grounds on both sides with people, arrange special buses from various parts to ferry in the excitement. That way those who want to participate can do so and the rest can get on with their lives. Instead now what do we do? Steer clear of those roads, reach late for appointments if you haven't got the cartography part of your brain in order or get stuck in humongous jams on the way home. Luckily Delhiwallahs have some training in patiently bearing with VIP movement.

## Trade unions voice protest

New Delhi: Several trade unions will hold a demonstration along the route of the Olympic torch relay on Thursday to protest the plight of workers who make sportswear and shoes for use during the Olympics.

All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC), Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU), Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC), United Trade Union Congress (UTUC), All India Central Council of Trade Unions (AICCTU) and New Trade Union Initiative (NTUI) will also be part of the initiative.

The Times of India on June 10, 2004

# Olympic torch relay to see protest

New Delhi, June 9: Several trade unions would hold a demonstration along the route of the Olympic Torch Relay in New Delhi on Thursday to highlight the plight of workers who make sportswear and shoes for use during Olympics and allegedly face exploitation.

"Over a hundred exploited workers from all over the country will assemble with placards to hold a peaceful demonstration near the Humayan's Tomb when the Olympic Torch passes near it," Hind Mazdoor Sabha secretary R.A. Mittal told journalists. All India Trade Union Congress, Centre of Indian Trade

Unions, Indian National Trade Union Congress, United Trade Union Congress, All India Central Council of Trade Unions and New Trade Union Initiative would also be part of the initiative, which had been undertaken under the international "play fair at the Olympics" campaign, Mr Mittal said. He said crores of dollars were spent on organising the Olympics, but the rights of those who worked for up to 12 hours a day for a pittance to make dresses and footwear used by players and others were "totally ignored."

A delegation of trade union leaders had recently met Indian Olympic Asso-

ciation officials and urged them to sideline companies which supplied clothes and shoes to it but did not follow labour laws, Mr Mittal said.

"We have also sought appointments with labour minister Sis Ram Ola and sports minister Sunil Dutt to seek their support," Mr J. John, executive director of the Centre for Education and Communication, an NGO which is part of the initiative, said. Mr Mittal claimed that the workers who made the goods for international markets were largely in the unorganised sector, were paid less than Rs 2,000 a month and not given social or job security. (PTI)

The Asian Age on June 10, 2004

# TU activists prevented from welcoming torch-bearers

TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, June 10

As many as 30 persons, including the secretary of the All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC), Mr D. L. Sachdeva, and the secretary of the Hind Mazdoor Sabha (HMS), Mr R. L. Mittal, were arrested this afternoon while they were proceeding towards the Humayan's Tomb to highlight the exploitation of workers in the sports goods and sportswear manufacturing industry.

Mr Sachdeva and Mr Mittal were leading the activists

of the 'Play Fair at the Olympics', an international campaign against exploitation of workers in the sports goods and sportswear manufacturing industry.

Mr Sachdeva termed his arrest as "an anti-Olympics action by the police".

"We only wanted to welcome the Torch bearers and highlight the conditions of workers in the sports goods and sportswear manufacturing industry," he said. However, more than 100 activists managed to reach Humayan's Tomb and staged the protest.

With flags bearing the

inscription, 'Play Fair at the Olympics', the activists demanded human rights for the workers in the sports goods and sportswear manufacturing industry, said J. John, convener of the India Advocacy Unit of Campaign Against Child Labour.

## A lifetime memory

The euphoria of watching the Olympic Torch touch down from the skies will remain with them for a lifetime. For the school students, who were chosen to

receive the famed torch at the airport, the moment will always be cherished.

Joining scores of school children, who had been chosen for the "honour" were 12 senior students from Manav Sthal, New Rajinder Nagar. Along with their teachers, these students presented hand made greeting cards to the foreign delegates accompanying the Torch.

To mark the celebrations, the Directorate of Education, Government of NCT of Delhi, has organised painting, essay competitions and debates.

The Tribune on June 11, 2004

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