

## Vijender Singh visits; BITS-Dubai Sports Festival 2009

*The Olympic Bronze Medal Winning Boxer, Mr. Vijender Singh signaled the commencement of the 6<sup>th</sup> edition of the annual BITS Sports Festival by lighting the Torch at the event's first ever Torch Lighting Ceremony. BITS-Pilani, Dubai campus reports the events.*

### **BITS-Pilani, Dubai TEAM**



Every good Sports Meet requires a Torch Lighting Ceremony and every good Torch Lighting Ceremony needs a memorable Chief Guest to do the final honors. Mohammed Ali did so at the 1996 Atlanta Olympics and this year on April 5 BITS, Pilani – Dubai had its very own 'Ali moment' when the Olympic Bronze Medal Winning Boxer, Mr. Vijender Singh signaled the commencement of the 6<sup>th</sup> edition of the annual BITS Sports Festival by lighting the Torch at the event's first ever Torch Lighting Ceremony.

The fanfare surrounding just this one moment required an entire day for itself. It began with a massive Torch Rally as each and every volunteer, organizer and participant, totaling well in excess of 300 students, ran alongside the selected Torch Bearers who passed it hand-to-hand along a 2.5 km long route that eventually terminated at the BPD Campus. The noise from the crowd that gathered to watch the

culmination of the Rally grew to a crescendo as the procession neared the Campus buildings, all of them eagerly awaiting a sight of the Torch and especially the last Torch Bearer.

The Director – BPD, Prof. (Dr.) M. Ramachandran was the penultimate Torch Bearer and a huge roar went up from the crowd as he handed the Torch over to Vijender to complete the remaining distance and set alight the BSF Lamp. This was accompanied by yet another thunderous applause.

Later on the champion addressed the crowd, candidly admitting that he was overwhelmed with the support showed for him by all the BITSians and was immensely glad that even sports like boxing had such a huge following. He also wished the best of successes to the organizers of BSF 2009 and expressed his desire to have a look at the venues and preparations for the event personally. Almost on cue, Mr. Rafiuddin – the man behind the creation of the BITS Sports Festival, escorted Vijender away from the addressing podium to give him a whirlwind tour of the various venues for the numerous sports being conducted all over the Campus.

First was a stopover at the office of Prof. (Dr.) M. Ramachandran and an interview with photo-op with the Press. There were T.V., Radio News Crews and Newspaper Correspondents to cover every word that the Olympic Hero had to say.

After this brief tête-à-tête with the Press, he was toured around the college sports facilities. Coincident with his arrival was the conclusion of the first ever Inter-University Boxing Coaching Camp that was also

organized by Mr. Rafiuddin as part of the BITS Sports Festival. It was indeed a great moment for the dozens of budding boxers to have the Olympic Bronze Medal Winner among their midst for the final day of the camp. Vijender was himself extremely excited at seeing the number of attendees and duly took some time out to give some valuable tips to the youngsters.

And so it ended and quite true to form the visit was a short and quick one, much like the way Vijender admitted he likes to keep his matches! But BITS had been smitten by the confidence and charisma of the young man from Bhiwani and would not lose its adoration for him so easily, a fact that was more than evident when the pugilist made an encore appearance at the BSF Awards Ceremony a week later. Once more he was assailed by a flood of fans eager to get a photograph, an autograph or anything for that matter. As he himself said while receiving a memento from the Director on the behalf of the Institute, "Adoration is not what I'm aiming for. What would really please me would be for these youngsters to finish what I have started and bring more glory to our country in sports." Amen to that!



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