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Indian sportspersons dressed in outfits designed by Tarun Tahiliani's brand at the official ceremonial dress event

# WEAVING THE SPIRIT OF INDIA

At the opening ceremony of the Paris 2024 Olympics on July 26, Indian athletes will sport celeb designer Tarun Tahiliani's specially-designed creations



A 'kurta bundi' set for sportsmen and a re-imagined saree in viscose crepe for sportswomen

RESHMI CHAKRAVORTY

**A**t the upcoming Paris 2024 Olympics, set to begin on July 26, two-time Olympic medalist badminton champion PV Sindhu will be the woman flag bearer for India during the opening ceremony. She will be wearing creations by celebrity designer Tarun Tahiliani, featuring ikat-inspired prints and Banarasi brocade. These designs marry craftsmanship with brand Tasva's 'India Modern' ethos. *CE* speaks to the designer about what went behind creating the Ceremonial Dresses for Team India athletes and more.

**Tell us about your experience working on the Ceremonial Dress for Team India.**  
Designing the Ceremonial Dress for Team India has been immensely rewarding. It is a great honour and responsibility to present our champions

on the global stage. It was also an opportunity to showcase India modern to the world.

Collaborating closely with the Indian Olympic Association and understanding the specific needs of the athletes allowed us to create garments that embody national pride and tradition while offering exceptional functionality and comfort. We retained the key traditional elements of the kurta bundi set and the saree and gave it a modern twist to make it more convenient.

Seeing our athletes dressed in our designs fills me with immense pride. As our athletes sail past the Seine river during the opening ceremony, they will carry a piece of India with them, making a bold statement in the fashion capital of the world.

**What were the pointers you kept in mind while designing?**

While designing the Ceremonial Dress, several key considerations guided the process. Firstly, it was essential to honour India's rich cultural heritage while incorporating modern elements to reflect the dynamic spirit of our nation. We focussed on the tricolour palette and ikat-inspired prints, which resonate across

diverse traditions.

Athlete-centric design was paramount. Comfort and functionality were crucial to ensure that the garments not only looked good but also supported the athletes' needs. The attire had to be breathable and lightweight to suit the summer heat of Paris.

Every design choice, from safari pockets and pre-pleated saris, to modern brocade trainers, was made to celebrate our heritage while prioritising the athletes' comfort and performance.

**Tell us about the creations. What can we see our athletes wear?**

We wanted to create something modern yet deeply rooted in tradition. Drawing inspiration from the *bundi* jacket, we've infused modern silhouettes and layers, offering a fresh take on a classic style.

The ceremonial attire celebrates India's rich cultural tapestry and patriotic spirit, reflected in the iconic tricolour palette of saffron, green, and white. Each element tells the story of India. We have used ikat-inspired printed panels in saffron and green, blue buttonholes representing the Ashoka Chakra, and ivory for peace and unity.

Designed for comfort and style, the classic

*kurta* and *Ali-garhi* combination in pure cotton ensures fluidity for unrestricted movement. Every detail, from the tape detailing to the safari pockets, is meticulously crafted.

For women athletes, we have made a pre-pleated sari in viscose crepe for natural drape and breathability, paired with a viscose satin lycra blouse for maximum comfort.

The look is completed with modern trainers adorned with traditional Banarasi brocade, seamlessly blending tradition with contemporary fashion.

**Were there any challenges while conceptualising it?**

One of the primary challenges was achieving the perfect balance between tradition and modernity. Convincing the association to use the tricolour for the ceremonial dress was particularly significant, as India had not used the tricolour in this context before. It was important to illustrate how the tricolour could effectively symbolise our national pride and unity.

**Future projects?**

Currently I working on a few future projects with launch of our ready-to-wear women's wear line and OTT shows.

