

Gov. Haley Joins Ground Breaking Ceremony of Gandhi Memorial Plaza in Texas

By Ela Dutt



The ground breaking ceremony for “Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Plaza” in Thomas Jefferson Park, Irving, TX, took place May 3. It was the result of the work of numerous Indian-American organizations that have been fundraising and lobbying government authorities to make it a reality. Close to 500 people attended the event which lasted for two hours, according to organizers.

South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley joined the Mayor of Irving City Beth Van Duyne at the event. India’s Consular General in Houston Parvathaneni Harish also participated in the ceremonial digging.

So far \$250,000 has been raised for the project, according Prasad Thotakura, chair of the Mahatma Gandhi Memorial of North Texas (MGMNT), the umbrella organization that is leading the effort. The total cost of the project is estimated at \$700,000 said Thotakura.

No city money will go into the building of the memorial, Ray Cerda of Irving Parks and Recreation told the Dallas News. Thotakura told News India times members of MGMNT are contacting local and national organizations and businesses to raise the rest of the money. and have had very positive responses from everyone. “It is not just an Indian-American project but a global project,” he added.

“... There is no reason we cannot have peace and love with everyone, and one thing he (Gandhi) constantly said was if we want to truly have peace and love, we have to start with children,” Haley is quoted saying in the release. “By putting this statue in this park, we are starting out with children, reminding them who he was, reminding them what he was about, and reminding them of the celebration he wanted his life to live on”.

Mayor Van Duyne praised the Indian-American community for funding the entire project and noted that Zip code 75038 in Irving had the most diverse population in America, the release said.

A 7 foot tall 30 inch wide bronze statue of Gandhi, which was cast in Andhra Pradesh, would be installed on a 6 foot tall pedestal. It would have a granite wall as a backdrop inscribed with Gandhi’s memorable words, as well as quotations from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Nelson Mandela and Albert Einstein, President Obama and others. The grand opening is scheduled for Oct. 2, when some family members of the Mahatma as well as of Nelson Mandela, are expected to attend, Thotakura said.

Others involved in the MGMNT team include Taiyab Kundawala and Swati Shah, co-chairs; Rao Kalvala, secretary, Dilip Patel, treasurer. The directors of the project include Piyush Patel, Shabnam Modgil, Jack Godhwani, and Paul Pandian. The Fundraising Chairs include Dr. Sudhir Parikh, publisher of Desi Talk and recipient of India’s Padma Shri award, Jof Hammond, and Kuntesh Choski. The Advisory Board includes A.K. Mago, recipient of the Padma Shri award; Prof. Caroline Brittle and MVL Prasad. Organizers are asking for donations for the memorial from around the country. For more information, visit www.mgmnt.org. For more information, call 817-300-4747 or write to prasadthotakura@gmail.com.

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