

Independence Day at Mahatma Gandhi Memorial

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Dallas, TX: More than 700 jubilant crowd consisting of many children, visiting parents and NRI's from all walks of life gathered to celebrate India's 72nd Independence Day Celebrations on August 15, 2018 at Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Plaza in Irving, TX. Dr. Prasad Thotakura, MGMNT Chairman hoisted the Indian flag in the midst of thundering applause of cheering crowds. Vice-consul Ashok Kumar from Consulate General of India, Houston Office attended as Chief Guest of Honor while Irving City Mayor Rick Stopfer, Sunnyvale City Mayor Saji George, Coppell City Councilmember Biju Mathew and former Director of Irving City Parks and Recreation Ray Cerda attended as special guests. Local musical teacher Swathi presented a couple of patriotic songs with her students at this event.

Rao Kalvala, MGMNT Secretary welcomed all and introduced Guests to the audience. In his opening remarks, Rao thanked the community and city of Irving officials for their great support in building this Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Plaza.

Dr. Prasad Thotakura, Chairman of Mahatma Gandhi Memorial of North Texas (MGMNT) in his message said "We pay rich tribute to all freedom fighters and national leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Subhash Chandra Bose, Chandra Sekhar Azad, Bhagat Singh, Lala Lajpat Rai, Jawahar Lal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and many more who surrendered and sacrificed everything in attaining independence from British rule".

Over the past 70 years, there is a lot of progress in India, now India is one of the fastest growing economies in the world. Despite this advancement, all Indians across the globe should unite to fight against social evils like Terrorism, Corruption, Domestic violence, Female infanticide, Illiteracy, Sanitation etc., for better India.

"We all need to realize that hatred, bigotry, outrage, racism will create an enormous gap among the mankind. Only patience, alliance, tolerance and coherence will bring all people together". Dr. Prasad Thotakura, Chairman, MGMNT said.

Vice-Consul Ashok Kumar on behalf of Consulate General of India, Houston and Dr. Anupam Ray congratulated the gathering for celebrating India's Independence Day with huge

enthusiasm. He said that it is very fortunate to participate in this event and India contributes to be in the right path in the right direction towards the development of the nation.

Irving City Mayor Rick Stopfer expressed that it is very proud and delighted to have many Indian Americans live in the Irving City and appreciated all their great contributions for the betterment of the city. Irving City always welcomes many immigrants and city officials are always there to help and build a strong relationship with the Indian American community. Mayor Rick Stopfer appreciated Dr. Prasad Thotakura and MGMNT Board of Directors for all their hard work and services and pleased to have Gandhiji Memorial in the center of the City. It is very joyful to see thousands of visitors across the globe visiting Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Plaza every month.

Former Director of Parks and Recreation, Irving City, Ray Cerda mentioned that he had pleasure to work with MGMNT Board members during the 4-year tenure in planning to build the Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Plaza. He also told that this Gandhi Memorial stood out as a memorable project not only in the state of Texas but also in USA. Cerda appreciated the efforts of MGMNT Board for raising over \$700,000 within short span of time to build this memorial.

Sunnyvale City Mayor Saji George appreciated Dr. Prasad Thotakura and MGMNT Board for organizing the Independence Day Celebrations event with a great patriotic fervor. He stated that 242 years back United States has declared its Independence. When compared to USA, India's democracy is young. India became the largest and best democracy in the world. Mayor George reminded that India got its independence through nonviolence, civilian disobedience. We are all proud to celebrate India's Independence Day in the land of USA.

Coppell City Council member Biju Mathew conveyed greetings from the city of Coppell officials and he is honored to be at the event. Biju Mathew thanked Dr. Prasad Thotakura, Rao Kalvala and all team members for their tireless efforts in building the largest Gandhi Memorial in the USA. He stated that being Indian Americans, we have seen vibrant democratic cultures melting into the main stream. He further stated that our home land India and adopted land USA are not different and both the nations have many things in common.

Kamal Kaushal, MGMNT Co-chair in his remarks stated that it was very joyful to see a huge crowd near Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhiji's memorial to celebrate India's Independence Day. He told that when India got its independence, it was an under-developed country but today India is a developed and the fastest growing economies in the world. India's Economy is higher than any other country in the world where the growth rate is over 7%.

Irving City Mayor Rick Stopfer released a book titled "Explorify" authored by a local writer Vivek Acharya. MGMNT Team felicitated all guests.

B.N Rao, MGMNT Treasurer in his closing remarks thanked Chief Guest, all Special guests, Irving City Officials, TV5 Media, Dallas Morning News, TV Asia for their media coverage, Bombay studio for photography, DJ Manesh for Audio Video arrangements, FunAsia for the promotion and scores of volunteers for making the event grand success. MGMNT Board of Directors John Hammond, Piyush Patel, Shabnam Modgil, Kuntesh Chokshi, community leaders MVL Prasad, CR Rao, Abhijit Railkar, Jack Godhwani attended the event. MGMNT Board distributed the Indian and American flags and refreshments at the event.

Besides MGMNT, University of Texas at Richardson also celebrated India's Independence Day Celebrations. Dr. Prasad Thotakura, President, Indian American Friendship Council attended as Chief Guest of Honor at the Independence Day celebrations event organized by the Indian Students Association.



