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America's Irving city to get Mahatma Gandhi's statue

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Houston: A life size bronze statue of Mahatma Gandhi would be installed in Irving in America's Texas state, fulfilling a long-cherished dream of Indian-Americans living in the city.

A 7-foot tall and 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 Martin Luther King Jr., Nelson Mandela and Albert Einstein, President Barack Obama and others.

The ground breaking ceremony for 'Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Plaza' in Thomas Jefferson Park, Irving, Texas last week was the result of the dedication of numerous Indian-American organizations that have been fundraising and lobbying government authorities to make it a reality.

South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley joined the Mayor of Irving City Beth Van Duyne at the event, which was attended by over 500 people.

India's Consular General in Houston, Parvathaneni Harish, also participated in the ceremonial digging.

So far USD 250,000 has been raised for the project, according to Prasad Thotakura, chair of the Mahatma Gandhi Memorial of North Texas (MGMNT), the umbrella organization that is leading the effort.

"It is not just an Indian-American project but a global project," he said, adding that the total cost of the project is estimated at USD 700,000.

"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 said at the occasion.

"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".

The grand opening is scheduled for October 2, when some family members of the Mahatma Gandhi as well as of Nelson Mandela, are expected to attend the event, a Thotakura said.

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