

## Mahatma Gandhi Statue in Dallas project



Dallas, TX: In a massive show of support, over 100 delegates from more than 50 different Indian organizations met at FunAsia Banquet Hall on March 6th under the auspices of Indian American Friendship Council (IAFC) and India Association of North Texas (IANT).

The meeting which was called to order by Taiyab Kundawala, Secretary IAFC mentioned in his opening address about the efforts of various organizations including IANT, in starting projects to establish a statue for Mahatma Gandhi but only now we have moved closer. Taiyab introduced Prasad Thotakura, Texas State Coordinator, IAFC and President-elect, Telugu Association of North America (TANA) who is spearheading the effort as a trusted and proven leader who could muster the support of various community organizations in Dallas area to make this dream come alive.

Prasad Thotakura pledged \$10,000 towards this project from IAFC. Prasad walked the audience through an excellent PowerPoint presentation regarding the concept, salient features and steps going forward. He mentioned that with over 100,000 strong Indian Diaspora, it is a fitting tribute to the Dallas landscape to have the 9 foot-high statue of Mahatma Gandhi in downtown Dallas near the City Hall. He showed the letter that the Dallas Convention Center sent allocating the location subject to some conditions such as funding, architectural plan etc. In this preliminary meeting, he wanted to gauge the enthusiasm of attendees to take next steps.

Continuing the presentation, he gave some details about the 9-foot statue with matching granite pedestal, 75-foot long granite Peace Wall with inscriptions of several famous pacifists such as Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela besides Mahatma Gandhi. He showed some preliminary architectural plans which include a flower garden, water fountain etc. besides at least 5 annual events relating to Mahatma Gandhi and his life. He mentioned that detailed architectural plans will be developed and will be presented to Dallas Convention Board soon for approval. He introduced MVL Prasad as the person in charge to coordinate the statue related activities including making, shipping and installation. He thanked the broad spectrum of people from all walks of lives, faiths and gender who showed their support by attending the meeting. He was positive that the installation could take place by August 15, 2010.

Prasad Thotakura introduced Niranjan Patel, President of India Association of North Texas (IANT) to the audience. Niranjan Patel, while pledging \$10,000 towards this project from IANT talked about extensive donations made by IANT in the face of natural disaster in India and USA. He reiterated the importance of this prestigious project and requested all attendees to donate generously in cash and kind.

Several prominent leaders belonging to various ethnic, social, cultural, religious and business organizations expressed their full support in all forms including financial to make this dream come true in Dallas. Prominent cardiologist Dr. Dhiren Shah expressed that such a prestigious project of pride to all Indians should spare no expense and should be done exquisitely. This view was fully endorsed by Nirmal Nilvi another successful businessman and long-term resident of Dallas. Several members of the audience wanted to know more details about the project so they can take it back to their respective communities. To this effect, a follow up meeting is scheduled for Saturday, April 3, 2010 at Dallas Convention Center.

The program ended with Dr. Sridhar Korsapati, Secretary IANT thanking all the attendees, volunteers, Bombay Photography for making it a grand success. He offered special thanks to the staff and management of FunAsia for providing excellent lunch, banquet hall and audio/video facilities.