

## **Statue of Unity, an Icon of India: a marvel beyond imagination**

Whenever we utter or hear the name of Mahatma Gandhi, the first word comes to mind is 'Non-violence'. Similarly, when we take the name of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, what we recall is the word 'Iron Man'. The project of building world's tallest statue of the 'Iron Man' in Gujarat has been declared a 'National Project' in the union budget 2014-15 for which the centre has allocated Rs. 200 crores. The Gujarat government has already given Rs. 500 crores in its budget to construct this iconic structure which will stand tall in the waters of river Narmada to represent the oneness of Indians despite the long standing socio-cultural diversity that exist in India and commemorate the man behind this unity and oneness of the nation. That's why Government of India has decided to celebrate Vallabhbhai Patel's birth anniversary on October 31 as 'National Unity Day'.

### **Statue of Unity: an Icon of India**

An Iconic 182 meters Statue, that's a tribute to the Iron Man of India, is to be built at the Sadhu-Bet Island, approximately 3.5kms south of Sardar Sarovar Dam at Kevadia in the Narmada district of Gujarat. This inspiring memorial site, with a number of edu-tainment components, is between the Satpuda and Vindhyachal Ranges rising weir Narmada River, impounded by Garudeshwar, the Sardar Sarovar Dam and the town of Kevadia. The majesty of this grand monument will be enhanced by a picturesque backdrop. Its unique location will prove to be beneficial for eco-tourism and regional development.

The 'Statue of Unity' is a dream project of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. It symbolizes Patel's impeccable work of uniting the disintegrated groups of nearly 565 princely states after the independence and building the Indian State. It stands as a tribute to the extraordinary administrative skills and bravery shown by the then home minister Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel in uniting India after the bloody and painful partition. The Sardar's 182 meters high first of its kind statue will undoubtedly lead to development of tourism with tourists inflow from all across the globe to visit India to admire its beauty and salute the man behind the Indian spirit and unity.

The work order for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's pet project 'Statue of Unity' the world's tallest statue of India's first home minister Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, has been issued by the Gujarat government to leading engineering company Larsen and Toubro (L&T). Work on the 182-metre tall statue of Sardar Patel is to be completed at a cost of Rs 2,979 crore, which is far more than the total sum of Rs 700 crores allocated so far. But, by declaring it a National project, the government has ensured speedy construction and adequate funding to the project.

"This huge construction work will be completed in four years at a cost of Rs 2,979 crore. The contract has been given to the country's leading construction company Larsen and Toubro", said Gujarat Chief Minister Smt. Anandiben Patel. Rs 1347 crore will be spent on the main statue, Rs 235 crore will be spent on the exhibition hall and convention centre, while Rs 83 crore will be spent on the bridge connecting the memorial to the main land and Rs 657 crore would be spent to maintain the structure until 15 years after it is completed. The 182-metre-tall 'Statue of Unity', which would be double the size of New York's 'Statue of Liberty' (93 metres), would inspire future generations. The project will include an exhibition hall and audio-visual presentation on the life of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, which will become the centre of attraction for tourists from the all over the world. 75,000 cubic metres of concrete, 5,700 metric tonne of steel structure, 18,500 steel rods and 22,500 metric tonne of bronze will be used for the project. It goes without saying that the 'Statue of Unity' project will generate employment in the tribal area of Narmada district as well as boost the tourism sector.

The project was launched by the former Gujarat Chief Minister and Prime Minister Narendra Modi on October 31, 2013, on Sardar Patel's birth anniversary. Shri Modi had also launched a country wide campaign to collect iron to build the 'Statue of Unity' and the Gujarat government has claimed that iron was collected from around seven lakh villages across the nation.

It's indeed a moment of pride for Gujarat that a leader from its soil is getting the honour of getting erected at an unprecedented height. No wonder the whole Gujarat would love to bow before him. But, restricting Sardar Patel

to Gujarat will be a dishonour to his work. His work, although started from the state, steadily crossed all the borders to leave an impact over the world and humanity in general. The words of Sardar Patel still resonate all over the world therefore there is no wonder this project was declared as a national one. We hope that the world would see it truly as a national project not a political one and every Indian takes pride in it.

The proposed height of the world's biggest statue is almost double the height of New York's world famous 'Statue of Liberty' and five times high than the Rio de Janeiro's statue of Christ the Redeemer. It will even be taller than the Sardar Sarovar dam. The statue is neither meant for merely taking pride in its magnitude nor will it stand like a silent memorial. Rather a special work plan has been designed to make this statue a vibrant working centre. The 'Statue of Unity' is being built not only to remember India's freedom struggle but also to inculcate Sardar Patel's visionary ideology of unity, patriotism, inclusive growth and good governance.

This statue will soon be developed into a fully functional economic centre which will connect people, provide health and education facilities, run various developmental activities for tribal population in the region. An agriculture research centre will also be established within it. Due to this project, Narmada district will have modern infrastructure which will benefit the district as well as the state. Modern infrastructure will give a boost to industrial development in the district. Various environment friendly industries can be established in the region which will not only provide employment to the local people but also help improve their standard of living. Farmers will also be benefited once the agricultural and bio-technological research centres are set up in the region. Last but not least the establishment of the marvelous statue will rejuvenate tourism industry.

The government envisages making the statue a vibrant centre of development. Although the project has been criticized in some quarters as wastage of resources and money but if the purpose behind the project gets served then it will certainly emerge as a modern centre for development for our country. Once completed, the iconic statue would indeed attract tourists, scientists, businessmen, intellectuals and researchers from across the world and project India's a new identity in the world. Just like Sardar's spirit and will, the statue would surpass the rest of the mute memorials in the world by being a vibrant economic centre.

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