

Embassy of India
The Hague

Press Release

October 1, 2017

Over 800 people participate in largest ever Gandhi March in the Netherlands to mark the International Day of Non-Violence.

Over 800 people of different ages, nationalities and walks of life participated in a 'Gandhi March' held in The Hague, the seat of Government of the Netherlands on October 1, Sunday as part of a 'Follow the Mahatma' campaign organised to mark the International Day of Non-Violence.

The day's proceedings began with the Netherlands Marathi Mandal entertaining participants with traditional dhol and dances inside the compound of the iconic Peace Palace, home to the International Court of Justice and the Permanent Court of Arbitration.

Ambassador of India to the Netherlands, Venu Rajamony along with Deputy Mayors of The Hague, Rabin Baldew Singh and Karsten Klein made brief speeches flagging off the march. A spark taken from the eternal 'World Peace flame' that burns outside the Peace Palace, (created using a flame from the Mahatma Gandhi memorial at Raj Ghat in Delhi) was handed over to Ambassador Venu Rajamony and the Deputy Mayors who led the march along with many Ambassadors and leaders of the Indian community.

The colourful march guided by motorcycle outriders in front and with mounted police on horseback at the end, wound through the streets of the city for about an hour before concluding at the historic Grote Kerk or Big Church of The Hague.

The marchers wore T shirts specially designed for the occasion with the 'Follow the Mahatma' campaign logo of Gandhiji walking with a stick in one hand and a cycle in the other. They also carried posters and shouted slogans advocating non-violence and peace as well as the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi.

Other dignitaries who took part in the activities included the Ambassadors of South Africa, United Kingdom, Austria, Spain, Indonesia, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, Political leader of Indian origin and Leader of Opposition in Suriname Mr Chandrikapersad Santokhi, celebrity fitness advocate and inspirational speaker Milind Soman, Mr Theo Henrar, Chairman of Tata Steel Nederland, Prof Vinod Subramaniam, Rector Magnificus of Vrije University in Amsterdam, former Members of the Netherlands Parliament R.Ramlal and Tanya Jednand Singh.

On reaching the Grote Kerk, the marchers paid respects to a bicycle personally used by Mahatma Gandhi and sent to the Netherlands by the Gandhi Memorial Trust of India as a special gesture, in view of the popularity of cycling in the Netherlands. An excerpt of Philip Glass's masterpiece opera titled 'Satyagraha' inspired by Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of non-violent resistance was performed by artists from the Korzo Theatre and Kwekers in de Kunst. The excerpt which portrayed the conversation between Arjuna and Krishna in the Mahabharata, was performed in a new adaptation with modern Indian dance.

A new book in Dutch titled "Gandhi -An illustrated biography" by Indian author Pramod Kapoor and published by Lannoo of Belgium was released during the event. The celebrations ended with a performance of Mahatma Gandhi's favourite songs 'Lead, kindly light', and 'Abide with me' as well as the famous civil rights song 'We shall overcome' by a choir group from the American Protestant Church of The Hague.

The 'Follow the Mahatma' campaign has been launched by organisations and individuals advocating Non-Violence in the Netherlands, the Indian community and the Embassy of India with the aim of reiterating to the world community the importance of Non-Violence and peace.

As part of the campaign, on October 2, 2017, volunteers will fan out to 22 schools of Netherlands and conduct interactive classes on Mahatma Gandhi and the Importance of non-violence. There will also be a social media campaign inviting people across the country to contribute photos and videos declaring their commitment to non-violence.

This International Day of Non-Violence, various other community events are being held across cities of the Netherlands, a country deeply devoted to the legacy of Mahatma Gandhi. Stichting Standbeeld Mahatma Gandhi will be celebrating the 148th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi with an event in the Peace Palace

with distinguished speakers including the Ambassador of India Venu Rajamony. Netherlands is the only country other than India to have over 30 streets named after Mahatma Gandhi and has 3 statues in the cities of Hague, Amsterdam and Utrecht. The statues in Utrecht and Amsterdam will be garlanded, cultural events will be held in Utrecht University to celebrate this occasion and a Gandhi peace walk will be held starting from the Gandhi statue in The Hague.

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