



Dandi Memorial Project high on culture ministry agenda

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NEW DELHI, MAY 25

THE Ministry of Culture is set to be a focus area for the Narendra Modi-led government and top on the ministry's agenda would be the much-delayed Dandi Memorial Project in Gujarat. Events for the approaching centenary celebrations of Deen Dayal Upadhyaya would be another priority.

With Modi mentioning Deen Dayal Upadhyaya's birth centenary in his speech at the BJP Parliamentary Party meeting, the Culture Ministry is waking up to the new political order. It is preparations and proposals are already being initiated at the Culture Ministry to keep up with the new Prime Minister's ideas.

One of the leading lights of Jan Sangh, Deen Dayal Upadhyaya's thoughts guide the BJP's philosophy.

The Culture ministry, incidentally, has been commemorating birth centenaries and anniversaries of various leaders and eminent personalities, from Rabindra Nath Tagore to Amrita Shergill and Moti Lal Nehru to Pt Madan Mohan Malviya over the last few years in the UPA regime.

Last year, Modi, as Chief Minister of Gujarat had written to the Centre on the delay in sanctioning funds for the Dandi Memorial Project for which the state government had submitted its proposal.

Highly-placed sources told *The Indian Express* that all groundwork has been finally done for the project which is set to take off. IIT Bombay is designing the memorial and is said to have made good

progress.

On the 75th anniversary of the Dandi march in 2005, Manmohan Singh, who was then UPA-I PM and held the Culture portfolio, had announced the project. Then came Kumari Selja followed by Chandresh Kumari Katoch as the culture ministers but things picked up pace only in the last quarter of 2013-14.

The project estimated to cost over Rs 200 crore is aimed at commemorating the historic Dandi march led by Mahatma Gandhi in 1930 as part of the salt satyagraha. A memorial is proposed on a 15-acre plot in Dandi, Gujarat, where Gandhiji and fellow marchers picked up salt from the sea beach to break the salt law of then British-ruled India.

The portal for the memorial describes it as "an experiential journey recreating the spirit and energy of the Dandi March, taking visitors step-by-step to understand the Dandi March story and the methodology of Satyagraha—the non-violent movement - which finally led to India's freedom from British colonial rule".

A statue of Gandhiji is proposed to be placed inside a pyramid of light, followed by a cluster of life-size sculptures of the group of 80 fellow marchers. Another part of the plan is to create a 'heritage walk' along the Sabarmati-to-Dandi route which Gandhiji had taken.

Replication of the Dandi route will be part of the main memorial through 24 spaces representing 24 halts during the march. Each space will have a panel with a depiction of main events through bas-relief sculptural narratives in stone.