

COMMUNITY NEWS

Houston hosts 2010 Hindu Mandir Executives Conference

Hindu Mandir (Temple) executives representing 111 temples and Hindu organizations from more than 25 states of US and Canada converged in Lithicum, MD, a suburb of Washington, D.C., to attend the fourth annual Hindu Mandir Executives Conference (HMEC), from Sept. 11 through Sept. 13.

Houston with an active and vibrant Hindu community, captured the honor of holding the 2010-Hindu Mandir Executives' Conference.

Dr. Sharma Tadepalli, of Sri Meenakshi Temple, Pearland, while accepting the honor of holding the next conference in Houston on behalf of Houston Hindus, said, "HMEC is uniting Mandirs while resolving issues and challenges facing the Hindu community. We want to unite temples in Texas and create a united front of all temples in Texas."

Hindus of Greater Houston will be a co-host of the conference.

At the fourth HMEC, the temples and Hindu organizations were represented by individuals from British Columbia-Canada, Hawaii, and California on the west coast to Texas, Florida, and the Carolina in the south, and the New-England-states on the East Coast, plus many states in the heartland of America.

The fourth annual HMEC-2009 was another step in the development of networks and relationships between Mandir executives to meet the goal of creating a cohesive and focused Hindu-American community with Mandirs as its nucleus.

The participants were focused on developing programs to provide leadership to nourish, protect and sustain Hindu Dharma in North America.

Participation by several large Hindu organizations like Art of Living, Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, Arya Samaj, BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha, Chinmaya Mission, Gayatri Pariwar, ISKON, Yogi Divine Society, Kauai's Hindu Monastery, JKP and JK Yog, Bharat Sevashram Sangha, Sikh Center of Virginia, as well as by devotees of Narayani Peetam and Sadhu Vaswani, and Hindu temples all over North America made HMEC an inspiring experience for the attendees.

The Mandir executives represented a wide cross-section of the Hindu community.

These attendees, who numbered over 250, are physicians, scientists, businesspersons, homemakers, engineers, etc., by profession, besides being temple executives.

They displayed a deep commitment in fulfilling the spiritual and social needs of Hindu-American community and an urge to create a legacy of which the next generations

can be proud.

The group was diverse in terms of age, race, generation, as well as national origin. HMEC 2009 had a strong participation from the youth.

The conference had several parallel sessions for the youth who represented temples from across the nation. Pooja, Shaily and Jemin representing 'Shri Mangal Mandir' in Silver Springs, MD, were happy to have met youth just like them and said, "We gained new perspectives within our own religion; we learned things that we can implement in our Mandirs and help our community"

Addressing the temple executives from across the country, Swami Dayananda Saraswati of the Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, who was the keynote speaker, emphasized that the Hindu Mandirs are "forms or manifestations" of tradition that can be handed over to the



Youth delegates at the HMEC 2009

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next generations.

These 'forms' are very important and the next generations should be made aware of these to preserve ancient traditions. Swami Mukundananda of JK Yog talked about the ap-

plication of management science in Mandir development in his inaugural address.

Hindu Mandir executives collectively deliberated on the evolving social, religious, cultural, spiritual, and next-generational needs of 2.5 million strong, confident, diverse and vibrant Hindu-American com-

munity.

Dr. Michael Busch of the Bramhananda Saraswati Trust mentioned, "It is very inspiring to see the depth of understanding and devotion to the Vedic tradition of India.

The cohesion and cooperation among all the temples to strengthen the enlightenment of Vedic knowledge in North America is encouraging."

The Hindu perspective of service was discussed through ideas shared by Anju Bhargava of the 'Hindu American Seva Charities' and Divya Selvakumar of the Hindu NGO, 'American Hindu World Service (AHWS)'. Hindu-Jewish dialogue was continued through a presentation by AJC.

This conference was striking in its use of multimedia presentations.

A multimedia video presentation by Dr. Michael Busch of 'Brahmananda Saraswati Trust', IA, on 'Maharishi Vedic City' was awe inspiring for its effort, ideals and objectives.

Another moving presentation was made by Mrs. Cathy Wenuk a devotee of 'Narayani Peetam' of Sripuram Golden Temple and its beautiful soul-nourishing environment and surroundings.

In the concluding session of the conference, the delegates agreed on a series of action items which emerged as a consequence of the deliberations and presentations:



Anju Gupta of Hindu American Seva Charities speaks at the conference.

•Hindu Seva Diwas: Conduct Seva (service) activities in large number of Mandirs on a single chosen day.

•Develop software and e-services for Mandirs. Apply readily available state of the art software technology to streamline routine Mandir operations.

•Develop training camps for Hindu Ambassadors in Mandirs, training Mandir adults and youth on essentials of Hindu Dharma and Hindu society, so that they can effectively articulate the richness of our traditions to larger public.

•Distribute Hindu textbook supplements to US school districts on the history of India which have been prepared by Hinduism Today.

•Develop a Samskar Manual for Young Couples. Write a clear, simple and attractive book on

Vivah Samskar.

•Establish a Hindu Mandir Youth Network in USA.

•Establish Hindu Mandir communication channel, through a Hindu Mandir Newsletter.

The delegates also agreed, and unanimously passed the following resolution for consideration of their temple's boards, in the concluding session of the conference.

Resolution:

We the delegates of the Hindu-American Mandirs at HMEC will help in all material ways possible to accelerate the restoration process of Hindu heritage sites world over. In particular, we appreciate and wholeheartedly support Dr. Animesh Sinha's efforts in preserving and restoring the sites of Braj.

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Obama appoints Arun Majumdar to key energy post

President Barack Obama has appointed Indian American Arun Majumdar as in-charge of advanced research in the field of energy, one of the key posts in his administration.

A product of Indian Institute of Technology, Mumbai, Majumdar has been nominated as Director of the Advanced Research Projects Agency – Energy in the US Department of Energy.

Currently, Majumdar is the Associate Laboratory Director for Energy and Environment at Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory and a Professor of Mechanical Engineering and Materials Science and Engineering at the University of California, Berkeley. Obama also announced his intent to nominate Daniel W Yohannes as Chief Executive Officer of Millennium Challenge Corporation and Gustavo Aranavat as US Executive Director to the Inter-American Development Bank.

"These individuals have proven that they will bring skill, dedication and expertise in these important areas to my administration, and I look forward to working with them in the coming months and years," Obama said in a statement.

Religious bias against Sikhs rising, claims group

The US-based leading Sikh advocacy group, Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund (SALDEF), has claimed that community's rights were being constantly curbed in that country and that the US could be fast going the France's way as far as framing laws for minorities was concerned. Over the last one year alone, SALDEF says it has confronted many attempts by US state governments to perpetuate or enact laws that impair or would have impaired the right of Sikh Americans to practise their religion.

SALDEF claimed that there were more than five instances in 2009 that hindered Sikhs from wearing their mandated head covering. "The Oklahoma legislature's attempt to ban head covering in ID photos, followed by a similar attempt by Minnesota state, the Maryland attorney general's views on veils and head coverings, the Oregon legislature's ratification of a law banning religious clothing for teachers and the Michigan supreme court allowing judges to order head covering removals were all new challenges for the Sikh community," claimed SALDEF.