

# **Gujarat (India) & Narendra Modi: When tourism removes people from their land, forest and livelihood**

Saturday 1 November 2014, by [PRAJAPATI Rohit](#), [SHAH Trupti](#) (Date first published: 30 October 2014).

## **PRESS RELEASE**

DATE: 30 October 2014

**We, activists of Gujarat oppose ‘Statue of Unity’ because it is in fact a ‘Statue for Tourism Industries’, a ‘Statue for Narendra Modi’s Name and Fame’ and ‘Statue for Criminal Waste of Public Money’.**

**Not a ‘Statue of Unity’ but a ‘Statue of Disunity’ that removes people from their land, forest and livelihood.**

We, Rohit Prajapati and Trupti Shah, activist of Gujarat oppose and condemn the construction of ‘Statue of Unity’; because it will be a statue that will divide and remove the tribal people from their land, forest and livelihood. It is a structure that will be 182 meters (392 feet) tall of Shri Sardar Patel planned near Sardar Sarovar Dam by Mr. Narendra Modi a man who is mastermind of ‘politics of hate’. The statue will be placed directly facing the Sardar Sarovar Dam at a distance of 3.2 km at the Sadhu Bet.

Surprisingly and shockingly, the Government of Gujarat had allocated Rs. 500 crores in the 2014-2015 budget and Government of India also had allocated Rs. 200 crores in the 2014-2015 budget for the ‘Statue of Unity Project’ by presuming that the ‘Statue of Unity Project’ does not require environment clearance from the concerned authorities.

Now Government of Gujarat issued a work order of Rs. 2,979/- to L & T for the construction of the ‘Statue of Unity’. The Government of Gujarat website clearly states that “A monument, that will not just be a mute memorial like the rest, but a fully functional, purpose-serving tribute that will boost tourism and facilitate development in the surrounding tribal areas.”

Having not received any response from the authorities, we were forced to file RTI applications to find out from the Government of Gujarat about environment safeguards fulfilled for the ‘Statue of Unity Project’. The reply which was expected from the Gujarat Government instead came from the Sardar Sarovar Narmada Nigam Limited (SSNNL) to our RTI application dated 3 June 2014. Similar RTI application dated 3 June 2014 was sent to office of the Chief Minister of Gujarat and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Rashtriya Ekta Trust. The PIO of Chief Minister of Gujarat forwarded the application to SSNNL and till date there is no response from the Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Rashtriya Ekta Trust.

Surprisingly, the office of the Chief Minister of Gujarat had no idea about the legality of the ‘Statue of Unity Project’. That is why they have not categorically responded to any of the issues raised in our letter dated 7 November 2013, instead they directed the Principal Secretary of Departments of

Forest and Environment as well as the Additional Principal Secretary of Narmada, Water Resources, Water supply and Kalpsar Department of Government of Gujarat to reply to our queries. Having laid the foundation stone for this ambitious project, it was expected from the Chief Minister of Gujarat's office to be abreast with all the details the 'Statue of Unity Project'.

The Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Rashtriya Ekta Trust kept quite on the issue for the best reasons known to them and the Sardar Sarovar Narmada Nigam Limited which says that "Environment Clearance is not required." The SSNNL had no idea about our RTI question number 6 (Copies of minutes of all the meetings in which the decision for the 'Statue of Unity Project' was taken.) & 7 (Copies of all the decisions, resolutions, notifications and letters issued for the 'Statue of Unity Project'.) and that is why they might have forwarded RTI to the PIO and the Secretary (Narmada), Narmada, Water Resources, Water Supply & Kalpsar Department, 9<sup>th</sup> Block, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Sachivalaya, Gandhinagar.

This adds more and more confusion about the 'Statue of Unity Project'.  
Our main objection to the 'Statue of Unity Project'.

The work on a project that proposes to build the world's highest statue in the form of 'Statue of Unity' near Sardar Sarovar Dam in the river downstream from the dam, just 3.2 km from the Shoolpaneshwar Sanctuary, in eco-sensitive zone and involving massive infrastructure has started work without legally mandatory environment clearance, environment and social impact assessment or any public consultation process.

This is clearly illegal, in violation of the Environment Protection Act, 1986 and EIA notification of September 2006 and a number of NGT and Court orders about such massive kind of construction on the riverbed. On 31 October 2013, the foundation stone was laid for the project amidst huge fanfare and media attention. Worked order to L & T is given for the construction. Even the work for the Garudeshwar weir, proposed about 12 km downstream of the Sardar Sarovar Dam, began without any social or environmental impact assessment, public consultation and environmental clearance from the Environmental Sub Group (ESG) of Narmada Control Authority's (NCA).

The website <http://www.statueofunity.in/> clearly state the purpose of tourism and involvement of the 'Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Rashtriya Ekta Trust' (SVPRET) to build 'Statue of Unity', 3.2 km downstream of the Sardar Sarovar Dam inside the Narmada River on an islet called Sadhu Bet.

The website [1] says:

"A 13 km. long water body (pond) will create an excellent tourist spot with available infrastructure on both the banks.

The Statue of Unity is planned to be erected in the river bed on downstream of the main dam in the Garudeshwar Weir pond. A permanent standing water pool in and around the Statue of Unity will be created by Garudeshwar Weir, which will enable boating activity around the statue." (Emphasis added.)

The Government of Gujarat website [2] clearly state that "A monument, that will not just be a mute memorial like the rest, but a fully functional, purpose-serving tribute that will boost tourism and facilitate development in the surrounding tribal areas." and will involve huge infrastructure as described on the official website.

The key issues that beg immediate scrutiny are as follows:

(1) The project clearly needs environment clearance under the EIA notification of September 2006,

but has not applied for or obtained the clearance at any stage.

(2) The Shoolpaneshwar Sanctuary boundary is touching the Sardar Sarovar Reservoir (as a part of the Environmental Protection measures of the Sardar Sarovar Project, the earlier Dhumkal Sloth Bear Sanctuary was extended to meet the reservoir boundaries and is called Shoolpaneshwar Sanctuary.) Since the statute is only 3.2 kms from the Sardar Sarovar Dam, it is certainly near by Shoolpaneshwar Sanctuary.

(3) The Project involves construction on the river bed and inside the proposed reservoir, close to sanctuary in eco-sensitive zone, and hence will have serious impacts on the ecology and environment. Hence, and EIA and EC is crucial.

(4) The project will affect the downstream river, its biodiversity, people and livelihoods and other related aspects.

(5) A comprehensive assessment of the environmental and social impacts of the 'Statue of Unity' and its contribution to the cumulative impact of all the projects and activities in the area has not been done.

(6) The project also needs public consultation, but none has happened so far.

(7) During the construction of the Sardar Sarovar dam due to hard rock digging, the seismic area already carries the burden of artificial activity in the bed rock and added load in what is deemed geologically fault line area. Public reports on geotechnical and geological studies on the proposed site have raised issues of structural stability as well as safety. This cannot be taken casually by authorities. The seismic hazard analysis claimed to have been done by the Gujarat Government's in-house "Institute of Seismological Research" [3] or the Geological and Geotechnical investigation commissioned to another government institute WAPCOS cannot be considered credible unless peer reviewed and put in public domain.

We demand that:

1. The Government of Gujarat should submit application for environment clearance to the concerned authorities and till that is obtained, not to do any work related to the project.
2. The Government of Gujarat should immediately stop planned project called 'Statue of Unity' and stop all other activities related to the 'Statue of Unity'.
3. The action of the foundation stone installation on 31 October 2013 for the project called 'Statue of Unity' by Mr. Narendra Modi the then Chief Minister of Gujarat is illegal, in violation of the EIA notification of September 2006 and the Environment Protection Act, 1986.

**Rohit Prajapati, Trupti Shah**  
Activist of Gujarat

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## Footnotes

[1] <http://www.statueofunity.in/execution.html#sthash.N9z6EHlu.dpuf>

[2] <http://www.statueofunity.in/>

[3] <http://www.statueofunity.in/execution.html#sthash.jEBrofSN.dpuf>