



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 102nd CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 137

WASHINGTON, WEDNESDAY, JULY 17, 1991

No. 110

House of Representatives

PRATISHTHA CELEBRATION HIGHLIGHTS
INDIAN CULTURE AND RELIGION

HON. FRANK J. GUARINI

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 17, 1991

Mr. GUARINI. Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my distinguished colleagues to join me in saluting an Indian religious celebration taking place in my home State of New Jersey in August.

From August 2 to 11, Indian people from all over the world will travel to Siddhachalam in Blairstown, NJ, for a Pratishtha celebration.

During this celebration, members of the Jain religion will gather to further explore their beliefs and their inner selves. The celebration will include a world Jain conference, a cultural program, discussions, and seminars.

More than 100,000 people from the new Jersey-New York area are expected to meet at Siddhachalam. Among those attending will be residents from the large Indian community present in my congressional district of Hudson County, NJ.

Hardyal Singh, president of the International Mahatma Gandhi Association and the United Indian American Association, and Mono R. Sen, chairman of the Indo-American Association, are both coordinators for this event.

Both Mr. Singh and Mr. Sen's organization's are based in Jersey City. The Pratishtha celebration is a further extension of their efforts to promote awareness of Indian culture and heritage in the United States.

Both men are leaders within Hudson County's Indian community, which is about 30,000 strong, and I commend them for their work on this project.

The gathering at Siddhachalam will mark a milestone in the history of Jain's growth outside India. Many spiritual leaders will attend the con-

ference, and L.M. Singhvi, India's High Commissioner to the United Kingdom, is also expected to attend.

The setting for this celebration is also important as Siddhachalam, in Blairstown, became the first Jain teerth outside India when it was founded in 1983. The word Siddhachalam means abode of supreme power. Since its opening, Siddhachalam has grown as Jain followers as well as non-Jains have flocked here for spiritual ceremonies.

Siddhachalam also serves as the headquarters for his holiness Acharya Sushil Kumarji Maharaj, who is founder-chairman and a leader of the Jain religion.

H.H. Maharaj, who is also known affectionately by his followers as Guruji, has dedicated his life to promoting nonviolence, peace, environmental protection, and animal rights. He is the founder of the World Fellowship of Religion and the International Mahavir Jain Mission.

Guruji has participated in many world religion conferences and has worked to establish harmony between all religions. When Pope John Paul visited India, Guruji stood against those who opposed his trip.

Although Guruji belongs to the Jain tradition of spirituality, Hindus also look to him as a leader.

He is a leader in efforts to create peace through nonviolence.

In 1990, Guruji was the main speaker for meditation and nonviolence at the Global Conference of Spiritual Leaders and Parliamentarians in Moscow. During this conference, he discussed matters of world peace with Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev.

It is through his work and leadership that those attending the August Pratishtha hope to further their learning about Jain and enhance their spiritual awareness.

My distinguished colleagues, please join me in extending our best wishes to his holiness Maharaja and all those attending the Pratishtha celebration.