

## Karnataka artists rally for Chaplin statue

Film and theatre personalities in Karnataka are coming together to support filmmaker Hemanth Hegde's plans to erect a statue of Charlie Chaplin for a movie -- a move opposed by Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) workers on grounds that the master comedian was a Christian.

The artists plan to stage a sit-in outside the town hall here Tuesday, following reports that BJP workers led by Suresh Bantadi had stopped Hegde from installing a 62-ft statue of Chaplin in Maravanthe beach, about 400 km from here, for his film 'House Full'.

'I am going get permission from the police to organise a dharna (sit-in) on Tuesday. But the date will be decided depending on when we get police permission,' Hegde said Monday.

Noted litterateur U.R. Ananthamurthy and actor-writer G.K. Govinda Rao are reportedly set to join in.

'Many literary, theatre and film personalities have been shocked over this incident. They want to mark their protest against such growing intolerant tendencies of some groups, which is bringing a bad name to the state. Such acts put restrictions on the creative freedom enjoyed by film and theatre directors,' said Nanda, Hegde's coordinator and an organiser of plays.

Film historians find the controversy doubly ironic because Chaplin had repeatedly expressed his opposition to organised religion, including Christianity.

Hegde had Sunday told IANS that he was shocked by the opposition to the statue.

'It came as a rude shock to me as I had taken permission from the deputy commissioner to erect the statue at Maravanthe beach,' the filmmaker had said.

He said a group of people objected and said they would not allow a Christian's statue to come up because there was a temple near the spot.

The director said he would look at alternative sites.

'I hope to get permission from the state government to install the statue at either Bhatkal Beach or Karwar beach in Uttara Canara district now. If I don't get permission, I will be unable to realise my ambition. This film has to release on time to recover costs,' the director said.

Hegde was hoping the statue would find place in the Guinness Book of World Records and that it would remain a tourist attraction even after the film's shoot.

The filmmaker added that he would approach the Karnataka Film Chamber of Commerce and seek their support on the matter.

K.C.N. Kumar, secretary of KFCC, said they would back Hegde if he had indeed taken permission.

'We have not received any complaint from the film production unit. If they had taken permission from the government for constructing the Charlie Chaplin statue, then stopping the work is wrong. We will support the film's producer in this regard,' said Kumar.

'House Full' is a comedy about two happy-go-lucky youngsters who are always stumbling on to new ideas to please their girlfriends.

( © IANS / India eNews)