

North Carolina: Hindu temple sign hit with over 60 shotgun blasts

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Houston: A sign board for a planned Hindu temple in the US state of North Carolina was fired at, leaving more than 60 holes, that prompted authorities to probe the incident.

The incident, which has shocked the Indian community, happened sometime between noon July 4 and about 1 pm last Saturday, Forsyth County Sheriff's Office said in a report.

The Sheriff's office is investigating the incident in which someone fired a shotgun at a sign for a planned Hindu temple, leaving more than 60 holes in the sign, it said.

A deputy found empty shell casings near the sign that were consistent with bird shot being fired two to three times from a shotgun, Winston-Salem Journal quoted Chief Deputy Brad Stanley of the Sheriff's Office as saying.

The sign suffered a damage of \$200. Investigators have no leads or suspects, Stanley said.

The Om Hindu Organisation of North Carolina is planning to build a 3,600-square-foot temple in Clemmons and has bought 7.6 acres at the site.

"We as American people are fighting hate, standing up to promote tolerance, respect and inclusion," Om Hindu said in a statement on Friday.

"We have no doubts that in long run we will be able to practice our religion and live peacefully in this region and work towards a pluralistic society."

The group also said it was moving forward with its plan for the temple.

The sheriff's office does not have any information that organisation was targeted because of its faith, Stanley said.

"It appears just to be vandalism," he said, adding that police have increased its patrols in the area.

Manujunath Shamanna, a member of the organisation's board of directors, said that his group first noticed the vandalised sign when its members visited the site last Saturday. The organisation then reported it to the sheriff's office.

"It is very disappointing," Shamanna said of the damaged sign. "It could be some kids playing."

About 500 Indian families live in Forsyth County.

The vandalism will not affect the organisation's plan to build its temple, Shamanna said.

Former Clemmons Mayor John Bost offered his apologies for the incident in a post on the Journal's Facebook page.

The Reverend Christopher Burcham, pastor at Union Hill Baptist Church, said he and his wife were disappointed when they noticed the vandalised sign on Thursday. His church is about 275 metres from the site of the planned Hindu temple.

The incident comes at the heels of reports of vandalising of North Texas Hindu Mandir in Dallas in April and vandalising

of two Hindu temples in Seattle metropolitan area of Washington State in February last.

President of Universal Society of Hinduism, Rajan Zed has demanded swift action against the culprits and said the incident has shocked the Hindu community in the US.

- PTI