

14.48 hrs.

Title: Statement of Minister of External Affairs regarding intended act of destroying statues and artefacts of Buddha at Bamiyan in Afghanistan.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now, Shri Jaswant Singh, Minister of External Affairs will make a statement.

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): Sir, in the face of universal concern and despite protests and cautions against taking any such step, the Taliban appear bent upon committing a grave wrong, indeed, a sacrilege to humanity, to the civilisational and cultural inheritance of all mankind by wanting to destroy the incomparable and unique statues of Buddha at Bamiyan. It is tragic that this act of vandalism, the most extreme amongst the many other acts of destruction of statues, artefacts and archaeological treasures of Afghanistan is being pursued despite a global outcry against it.

1449 hours (Mr. Speaker *in the Chair*)

This regression into medieval barbarism is precisely what India, amongst many other countries, has been cautioning the world against for so long. The international community has unequivocally condemned and rejected the Taliban's ideological orientations which have been responsible for the Taliban territories emerging as the world's principal centre of international terrorism, illicit drugs and violation of human rights, especially those of women.

Even at this late stage, we would like to convey that the destruction of these precious manifestations of the cultural heritage of humankind should stop. If the Taliban do not wish to retain this inheritance, India would be happy to arrange for the transfer of all these artefacts to India where they would be kept safely and preserved for all mankind, in the full knowledge and clear understanding that they are, in the first place and above all, treasures of the Afghan people themselves.

I also wish to add, Mr. Speaker Sir, that in light of the statement that the Government made in the other House, the other House has adopted unanimously a resolution. It is for you and this House to consider that act or a similar act.

SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY (MIRYALGUDA): Mr. Speaker Sir, I rise to express horror and outrage at the on-going programme of medieval vandalism in Afghanistan. I completely endorse the statement made by our External Affairs Minister. The medieval barbarism seems to be so sweeping as to result in destruction of all the statues of Lord Buddha including the world's tallest Buddha statue.

MR. SPEAKER: Shri Jaipal Reddy, on behalf of the House, I am going to place the resolution.

SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY : Sir, I request you to place the resolution.
