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Title: Need to preserve the sacred relic of Lord Buddha at Lalitgiri, Orissa.

SHRIMATI ARCHANA NAYAK (KENDRAPARA): Sir, I would like to draw the attention of the hon. Minister of Culture and Tourism to the following matter of my constituency.

In 1982, during an archaeological excavation conducted at Lalitgiri site in the State of Orissa, golden caskets containing the sacred relic of Lord Buddha was recovered. This rare and precious relic is the centrepeice of the findings in the famous Buddhist site of Lalitgiri.

It was kept in the strong room of Archaeological Survey of India's Headquarters at Bhubaneswar, Orissa for the last 25 years. There was a demand, time and again, to place the relic in Lalitgiri at the very site of its recovery. Now, I have come to know that the Government of India has recently decided to transfer the sacred relic to Ratnagiri, another Buddhist site under the ASI, and keep them permanently there.

This decision has hurt the sentiments of the people of Lalitgiri area. The local people take pride in the Lalitgiri site as an ancient centre of Buddhist culture and a potential destination of foreign tourists, especially from the Far East.

Since Lalitgiri forms part of my constituency and a mass agitation is gaining momentum against the decision to place the sacred relic in Ratnagiri, I would like to request the hon. Minister of Culture and Tourism to reconsider the above decision and to preserve the sacred relic of Lord Buddha at the very site of its recovery, Lalitgiri in Orissa.