

and extent of likely threat from Chinese Submarines. All possible steps to strengthen and increase our anti-submarine forces—both surface and air-borne—are being taken.

12.01 hrs.

CALLING ATTENTION TO MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

REPORTED THEFT OF SCULPTURES FROM KHAJURAHO AND A BRONZE STATUE FROM CHAMBA TEMPLE

SHRI VIKRAM CHAND MAHAJAN (Kangra): Sir, I beg call the attention of the Minister of Education and Social Welfare to the following matter of urgent public importance and I request that he may make a statement thereon :—

"The reported removal of hundreds of famed erotic sculptures from Khajuraho, their alleged sale to foreign countries and sale of a life-sized bronze statue of Lord Vishnu stolen from a temple in Chamba, Himachal Pradesh, for fifty lakhs [of rupees to a U. S. Buyer."

THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION AND SOCIAL WELFARE, AND MINISTER OF DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE (SHRI SIDDHARTHA SHANKAR RAY): I am grateful to the Honourable Members for drawing attention to a grave problem which is causing considerable concern to the Government and is under its active consideration. Theft of our art objects is a serious matter and it goes without saying that the question has to be dealt with thoroughly and sternly. I have written to the Chief Ministers of a number of States for the purpose of deputing responsible officers to a conference called on 30th June, 1971 by me for the purpose of discussing this issue and formulating an adequate scheme whereby such thefts are checked and controlled. The Government has also already taken several steps in order to prevent such thefts and the illegal smuggling out of our country of our art objects. These steps up till now have been :

(1) Loose sculptures in and around Centrally

protected monuments, which cannot be adequately safeguarded *in situ*, are being collected and stored in sculpture sheds where they could be better looked after.

- (2) Watch-and-ward staff of Centrally protected monuments has been strengthened. 1695 more posts of monument Attendants have been sanctioned and are in the course of being filled up.
- (3) State Governments have been requested to provide police guards at selected museums and monuments under the Archaeological Survey of India.
- (4) Watch-and-ward staff of the Survey has also been warned to be more vigilant. Cases of thefts are required to be immediately reported to the police.
- (5) As soon as cases of thefts are detected, intimation is also sent to the Expert Advisory Committee and Customs Authorities at major ports to watch out for the stolen antiques being smuggled out of the country.
- (6) In order to have complete documentation of sculptures at centrally protected monuments, a phased programme is being drawn up by the Survey. Documentation will facilitate the identification of stolen sculptures and will check smuggling of art objects. Necessary staff has been sanctioned for this purpose.
- (7) It is proposed to enter into bilateral agreements with foreign countries to stop flow of antiquities by illegal means.
- (8) It is proposed to give in-service training to customs staff for identifying antiquities, so that they may be able to detect these if attempted to be smuggled out of India. Six posts of Deputy Superintending Archaeologists have been sanctioned on the strength of the Archaeological Survey of India for being posted at important air and sea ports to help custom authorities in checking smuggling of antiquities to foreign countries.

Siddhartha Shankar Ray

- (9) The C. B. I. has commenced the maintenance of central records of crimes, criminals and property involved in cases of this category. This work was started with effect from January, 1969.
- (10) The assistance of the Secretary General, ICPO-Interpol, Paris, has been sought to compile a list of all foreign dealers and collectors of art objects. This list when completed will be issued to the customs authorities so that any packet addressed to these persons and being smuggled out of the country may be checked.

The Government is also contemplating repealing the present Antiquities (Export Control) Act, 1947 which merely controls the export of objects of antiquarian or historical interest or significance out of India and proposes to reenact in its place a more comprehensive law :

- (a) Providing that the Central Government or any authority or agency authorised by the Central Government in its behalf shall alone be entitled to export any antiquity and making it unlawful for any person, authority or agency to make such exports ;
- (b) Preventing any person from carrying on business in selling any antiquity except in accordance with licences granted therefor by the appropriate authority ;
- (c) Requiring all holders of such licences to maintain registers containing particulars of the antiquities in their possession and keeping all such registers open for inspection by licencing officers at any time ;
- (d) Making stringent provisions preventing smuggling in antiquities and laying down various penalties therefor ;
- (e) Empowering the Government with wide powers of search and seizure for the purpose of preventing and checking thefts of our art objects or their being smuggled out of our country.

It is proposed to introduce a Bill for this purpose in the present session of Parliament.

This Honourable House no doubt appreciates that no matter what steps the Government of India may take in the matter of such thefts etc., the question is also inextricably connected with Law and Order which is a State subject and unless vigorous steps are also taken by our State Governments to protect thefts of our art objects from our various monuments, temples, shrines, etc. the Central Government alone cannot effectively deal with the matter. It is for this purpose that the conference about which mention has been made earlier has been called on the 30th of this month.

While fully appreciating the concern of the Hon'ble Members for the loss of some of our art objects, I must hasten to add that it is not correct that hundreds of sculptures have been removed from the Khajuraho and sold to foreign countries. Between 1956 and 1968 there have been only 6 thefts involving the loss of 4 stone sculptures and 11 bracket figures. When I say this it is not for the purpose of in any way suggesting that the matter is not serious. The theft of a single art object is serious enough to be dealt with sternly and promptly. All that is intended to be conveyed however is that the impression of the Hon'ble Members that hundreds of sculptures have been removed is not correct and that in fact only 6 thefts have taken place between 1956 and 1968 at Khajuraho. Out of these again 3 sculptures have been recovered by the Madhya Pradesh police authorities and our watch-and-ward staff there has already been strengthened. Further safety measures have also been introduced for safeguarding the monuments and sculptures there.

The Vishnu idol which was stolen from the Harrai temple in Chamba, Himachal Pradesh, was a metal image about 1000 years old. Active worship, however, still went on in this temple as a result of which in so far as the Archaeological Survey of India was concerned it had to look after the outer side of the temple and the preservation of its structure. The Archaeological Survey was, however, not responsible for the *Sanctum Sanctorum* (Garbha Griha) and the idol was not under the custody of the Archaeological Survey. The Pujari

of the temple was in fact not only in charge of the sanctum sanctorum but the idol was also in his custody. The keys of the sanctum sanctorum were kept by the Pujari. All that the Archaeological Survey of India was concerned with was the structural stability and preservation of the temple. However the Government is not putting this point forward as an excuse nor is it saying that sternest measures should not be taken for the prevention of such thefts and the ultimate recovery of the idol even though the idol may not have been in the custody of the Archaeological Survey.

The Government of India came to know about this theft on the 7th May, 1971 and has since then been in constant touch with appropriate authorities for the purpose of finding out as to whether the culprits had been apprehended and the idol recovered. Soon after the theft had been noticed, a report was lodged with the Police authorities at P. S. Sadar, Chamba (H. P.) being F. I. R. No. 20 dated 7th May 1971. This case was registered at 6.30 A. M., that is to say, early in the morning following the night the theft had taken place. Immediately after the registration of this case, a special staff was pointed by the Police Department of Himachal Pradesh and under a Deputy Superintendent of Police for its investigation and the police posts at all relevant points in India were alerted through wireless messages so that the stolen idol could be recovered. The Himachal Pradesh Government has informed the Government of India that vigorous investigation is going on with regard to this case and that the investigation so far made has revealed that the idol was stolen by three persons who had come in a car and stayed at Chamba on the relevant night. It has also been reported by the Himachal Pradesh Government that as a result of the investigation made so far it has been possible to unearth the gang suspected to be responsible for the theft and five members of this gang have already been arrested.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU (Diamond Harbour) : Sir, I rise on a point of order. Under rule 196 the Minister is expected to make a brief statement on a calling attention notice. He cannot make a long speech.

SHRI SIDDHARTHA SHANKAR RAY :

I know the tactics of Shri Jyotirmoy Basu and his party. I have faced him in Bengal for years. I know this is their habit....(interruptions)

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU : Sir, this has nothing to do with parties. I am quoting a rule which clearly says what I said.

MR. SPEAKER : I know his point of order and the relevant rule. In that case, shall I start enforcing all the rules strictly? If it is the pleasure of the House, from tomorrow, I will enforce them strictly. They will be applicable to both sides.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU : I am not insisting on anything. I am only quoting a rule.

MR. SPEAKER : In that case, he should ask only simple question.

SHRI SIDDHARTHA SHANKAR RAY : I hope the House will pardon me for this long statement, but I think this is a serious matter. So, I must place all the facts before the House.

Vigorous efforts are a foot for apprehending the remaining accused and the recovery of the idol. The investigation carried out so far has not yet disclosed any evidence to indicate that the stolen idol had been taken out of India. However, since it was apprehended that attempts may be made to smuggle the idol out of India, all check posts have been alerted by the Interpol Division of the CBI to prevent this. A telegram has been sent to the Secretary-General of Interpol giving him the description of the idol with a request to alert all National Crime Bureaus so that if this idol is noticed in any country, India may be informed about it.

This case is still under active investigation and therefore, I am sure, that the hon. Members of this House will appreciate that it will not be in the public interest to disclose any further details about this case until investigation is complete.

SHRI VIKRAM CHAND MAHAJAN : A plunder of priceless antiquities is going on and they are being smuggled out of India in an alarming number. This is not the first instance where this has happened. Statues have been

[Shri Vikram Chand Mahajan]

stolen from the Jain Temple, Devgiri, UP, Ranikhet Temple and then 20 statues from Broch temple in Madhya Pradesh. The hon. Minister has stated in his statement that only four statues and 11 brackets were stolen. The *Hindustan Times* of 17th and also its editorial of 20th say that over one hundred fabulous sculptures valued at several million dollars have been ripped off Khajuraho temple and smuggled abroad to decorate the drawing rooms of foreigners. The *Nasbharat Times* of 19th June also says that about 110 brackets have been stolen. I wish that the hon. Minister makes a thorough enquiry whether the department has given proper information to this House or not because if three newspapers give the information that hundreds of sculptures have been stolen, then there is certainly something wrong somewhere.

Now, coming to this temple of Chamba the *National Herald* says : "It is a protected monument, under the care of the Archaeological Survey of India, the Hari Rai Temple in Chamba which lost its unique tenth-century bronze image of Vishnu on May 6". Today is June 21 and so far we do not know where the statue is. The Paper further says : "The life-size image weighs about 100 kg. and has been valued at Rs. 60-70 lakhs by official evaluators. Its International price would run into several hundred thousand dollars... The source said that the ultimate buyer of the piece could be a particular museum in America which had earlier dealings in antiques with a Bombay man". Sir, this is the information supplied by *National Herald*.

Another Paper—*Nav Bharat Times* of 19th—has put the figure at 100 crores of statues and figures stolen and smuggled abroad.

I wish to bring to the notice of the Minister a few more points. One of them—so far as this particular temple is concerned—in the statement of the Minister it is said that the temple is under the protection of the Archaeological Department but not the idol. Sir, nobody is going to lift the temple and take it away. It is humanly not possible to take the complete temple and ship it abroad. The only thing they can take is a statue or a figure or a

bracket from Khajuraho. I hope in future the idols are also taken under the care of Archaeological Department. This particular statue of Lord Vishnu weighs 100 kg. and no person could have taken it without the connivance of the local police or local pujari.

Now, I would like to ask three or four questions : Have you taken the pujari into custody or have you let him off. Without his connivance and that of the local police this would not happen. Second, what are the tests laid down by the Archaeological Department to decide whether a temple should only be taken under the protection of the Archaeological Department and not the idol or the idol and not the temple. Third, what is the maximum penalty provided under the law for those who commit such a theft and how many persons have so far been convicted of this particular crime. Lastly, what steps have been taken so far to protect the temples of Khajuraho and Chamba and who were the persons in charge of these monuments ? I want a detailed reply.

MR. SPEAKER : I think, I have to send a Committee to all these temples.

SHRI SIDDHARTHA SHANKAR RAY : Mr. Speaker, Sir, my hon. friend has asked me several questions but fortunately they can be divided conveniently into two groups. The first group relates to the Khajuraho group of temples and the other with regard to the Chamba Idol. In so far as the Khajuraho group of temples is concerned the hon. Member has proceeded on the basis that 110 rare pieces have been stolen and he seems to think that that must be correct. I can assure this House that I have not only discussed with officers in Delhi but I sent for Shri Binod Shankar, who is the person in charge in Khajuraho on behalf of the Archaeological Survey of India—he is, in fact, the Conservation Assistant there—and had a personal discussion with him.

SHRI PILOO MODY (Godhra) : Why do you not go and see those sculptures yourself ?

SHRI SIDDHARTHA SHANKAR RAY : I leave it to Shri Pilo Mody who will enjoy

them much more. I have not yet reached that stage.

I have, to the best of my ability, made inquiries and investigation and these investigation and inquiries reveal that the figures are not as mentioned by my hon. friend but those as mentioned in my statement.

With regard to the Chamba temple, the first question that has been asked is as to why we did not make the idol also a national monument.

SHRI VIKRAM CHAND MAHAJAN :
Protected idol and not protected monument.

SHRI SIDDHARTHA SHANKAR RAY :
The fact is that the idol in this case happened to be in actual worship. But I have made it clear in my statement that the Government is not taking shelter under this plea ; Government must see to it that thefts of this kind do not take place. Therefore, my hon. friend need not worry on this score. Government will certainly take action to prevent thefts of this nature, whether the idol is in the custody of the department or not.

With regard to the pujari, the hon. Member has asked as to why the pujari has not been taken into custody. I would request the hon. Member to take this matter up, if he so thinks fit, with the Himachal Pradesh Government because this is a law and order matter. But as far as we have been able to ascertain, Ishwari Prasad is the person who had lodged the FIR early in the morning of 7th and from the information received it seems that he had said in his FIR that he had locked the temple and gone out and then he had come to know that this had been lost. It appears that he is perhaps the pujari, because the key is in his possession.

The matters mentioned by the hon. Member I think, have been sufficiently dealt with.

SHRI VIKRAM CHAND MAHAJAN :
How many have been convicted ?

SHRI SIDDHARTHA SHANKAR RAY :
In so far as the Chamba thing is concerned, I have mentioned the persons who have been arrested.

SHRI VIKRAM CHAND MAHAJAN :
How many have been convicted so far and what is the maximum penalty ?

SHRI SIDDHARTHA SHANKAR RAY :
With regard to the number of thefts from the year 1952 to 1970, I have gone into all that and I find that up to 1970 there were 165 thefts and up to 1971, taking the latest theft into account, it could be 168. I should be delighted to give the hon. Member all the information if he kindly comes to me for this purpose ; I have all the figures with me.

SHRI VIKRAM CHAND MAHAJAN :
How many have you convicted so far ?

SHRI SIDDHARTHA SHANKAR RAY :
There have been so many cases.

श्री ज्ञानेश्वर प्रसाद वाइच (कटिहार) :
अध्यक्ष महोदय, मैं मंत्री महोदय का बहुत आभारी हूँ कि उन्होंने विषय चर्चा करके पूर्ण विवरण देने की चेष्टा की है। लेकिन एक बात उन्होंने कही है कि खजुराहो से जो मूर्तियाँ गयीं वह हमारे सांस्कृतिक वैभव की बात है। मैं कहना चाहता हूँ कि चाहे सारी मूर्तियों की चोरी की गई हो अथवा एक मूर्ति की चोरी की गई हो, महत्त्व सबका बराबर होता है। जैसा मंत्री महोदय ने बतलाया खजुराहो में और 6 मई को चम्बा के हरिराम मन्दिर से आदमकद कांश्च मूर्ति की जो चोरी हुई, जिसके विषय में 7 मई को पुलिस को सूचना दी गई, उसके सम्बन्ध में मैं आपका प्रोटेक्शन चाहता हूँ और कहना चाहता हूँ कि पुलिस विभाग के लोगों ने और दिल्ली की पुलिस ने जान-बूझकर बहुत मड़बड़ की है, जिसके कारण जो सही अपराधी वे वह पकड़े नहीं गये। इसके विषय में मैं 19 तारीख के नेशनल हेराल्ड से उद्धरण देना चाहता हूँ। 10 तारीख को वह मूर्तियाँ दिल्ली में थीं :

"Meanwhile a powerful Bombay antique dealer arrived here to negotiate on the purchase and transshipment of the bronze piece to America. He was reportedly staying in a South Delhi hotel for three days. The local police were informed of the dealer's visit and the presence of the Vishnu here by the informer." "

[श्री ज्ञानेश्वर प्रसाद यादव]

लेकिन दिल्ली की पुलिस ने उसके ऊपर कोई कार्रवाई नहीं की। मंत्री महोदय से मेरी मांग है कि इसमें पूरे तथ्यों की जांच की जाये और इसका भार सी० बी० आई० को दिया जाये। मेरे पास कुछ ऐसे तथ्य हैं कि अगर सी० बी० आई० को इसकी जांच का भार दिया गया तो उसको मैं बह दे दूंगा। मैं दो प्रभूता सम्पन्न व्यक्तियों के नाम भी सी० बी० आई० के सामने रखने की चेष्टा करूंगा जो अपने पद का दुरुपयोग करके इस तस्करी में मिले हुये हैं। तो मेरी मांग यह है कि इस सारे मामले को सी० बी० आई० के सुपुर्द किया जाये।

दूसरी बात मैं यह जानना चाहता हूँ कि क्या भारत सरकार अमरीका सरकार के ऊपर कोई दबाव डालने का इरादा रखती है? अमरीका म्यूजियम में कुछ ऐसे लोग हैं जो हमारी सांस्कृतिक वैभव की चीजों की तस्करी व्यापारियों द्वारा तथा जो अन्य मूर्ति चोर हैं उनके द्वारा चोरी से मंगाया करते हैं।

तीसरी बात यह है कि क्या भारत सरकार भारतीय बन्दरगाहों पर कुछ पुरातत्व विभाग के बरिष्ठ अधिकारी तथा कुछ विशेषज्ञ रखेगी और इस बात का परीक्षण करवायेगी कि जो मूर्तियां वहां से चोरी करके लोग ले जाते हैं वास्तव में क्या वह हमारी सांस्कृतिक धरोहर की मूर्तियां हैं और वही की मूर्तियां हैं?

मेरा चौथा प्रश्न यह है कि क्या सरकार इन मूर्तियों की सुरक्षा के लिये, जो कि वास्तव में हमारी सांस्कृतिक और ऐतिहासिक धरोहर है, संग्रहालय में या धार्मिक स्थानों में किसी मूर्ति प्रोटेक्शन फोर्स की स्थापना करेगी? अगर इस तरह का काम किया जाता है तो इसमें किसी ज्ञान कर्ष की भी बात नहीं है। संग्रहालयों में और धार्मिक स्थानों में मूर्ति प्रोटेक्शन फोर्स की स्थापना की व्यवस्था आसानी से की जा सकती है।

पांचवीं बात मैं यह जानना चाहता हूँ कि

क्या सरकार संग्रहालयों में और मन्दिरों में जो सांस्कृतिक वैभव की चीजें रखी गई हैं उनकी तथा मूर्तियों की कोई सूची बनाने का विचार रखती है?

SHRI SIDDHARTHA SHANKAR RAY :

Sir, the hon. Member has asked me five questions.

The first is as to whether the Government should entrust the investigation to the C. B. I. As at present advised, it appears, the Himachal Pradesh Government is carrying out the investigation. They have already arrested a few persons and they are in possession of certain facts which, as I said, in public interest, I cannot disclose before the House. This makes it appear that the Himachal Pradesh Government is in perfect possession of facts and is carrying out the investigation on right lines. I do not think the stage has come for the C. B. I. to intervene. But if the hon. Member, as he pointed out has any particular names in mind, I shall be very grateful if he can see me and give me the facts and the names which he wants to be taken into account.

With regard to the US Government, the investigation is going on and, if necessary, we will take up the matter at the Embassy level.

With regard to having proper persons at ports in India to check antiquities being smuggled out, I have already mentioned that amongst the ten proposals that the Government has made and is intending to carry out, one of the proposals is to provide for such facilities and to appoint six persons as Deputy Superintendent Archaeologists who will be able to identify antiquities.

With regard to the setting up of a protection force, I am glad the hon. Member has mentioned this because that is also a point which I mentioned the day before yesterday when we had a conference. We are trying to find out the financial implications of it. But we have, as I have already mentioned, sanctioned over 1600 new posts of moment attendants.

With regard to his fifth point, that is to say, whether a catalogue is being prepared of idols,

we are doing something better. We are having a photographic documentation of the various art treasures and objects that we have in numerous places in India. This is a must and I have no doubt whatsoever that the Government would try to have this documentation as early as physically possible.

श्री ज्ञानेश्वर प्रसाद यादव : मंत्री महोदय ने कहा है कि मेरे पास अगर कुछ तथ्य हैं तो मैं उसकी जानकारी उनको दूँ। मुझे आश्चर्य है कि मंत्री महोदय ऐसे बरिष्ठ व्यक्तियों के विरुद्ध कार्रवाई करने में हिचकेंगे। इसलिए मैं चाहता था कि सी० बी० आई० को जांच का काम दे दिया जाये। ऐसा अगर कर दिया जाता तो अच्छा होता। वैसे उनसे मिलकर मैं जानकारी देने की कोशिश करूँगा।

SHRI SIDDHARTHA SHANKAR RAY : I can assure the hon. Member that the Himachal Pradesh Police is already taking the fullest assistance from the CBI and the responsibility for investigation can be transferred from the State Police to the CBI only at the request of the State Government and if the hon. Member has no confidence in me, he may not accept the facts I give.

SHRI G. P. YADAV : I have confidence.

MR. SPEAKER : Please don't convert this motion into a regular hour for debate. This is a very simple call attention motion. Please try to be relevant.

SHRI SEZHIYAN (Kumbakonam) : As a conservative estimate by an expert, during the past ten years, antiques, rare manuscripts, precious miniature paintings and ancient jewellery and idols to the tune of Rs. 100 crores has been smuggled out of the country. It is a very conservative estimate and it is published in the papers. The Minister says that there have been only 6 thefts involving the loss of 4 stone sculptures and 11 bracket figures from Khajuraho. I don't doubt the sincerity of the Minister or the officer concerned but the whole trouble is that the Government and the officers themselves do not know how many sculptures are there in each of these temples and ancient monuments. In the statement made by the hon.

Minister it has been stated that "in order to have a complete documentation of sculptures and protected monuments a phased programme is being drawn up by the Survey." That means that the Survey does not now have a complete documentation of all these sculptures in any particular place. Therefore, whether 100 have been stolen or only 11 have been stolen, they do not themselves know. The papers have uniformly stated and it was stated by all the correspondents who visited the spot and made inquiry in those places that 110 pieces of sculpture have been stolen at Khajuraho. Whenever they take a cue and go to unearth any antique shop or hoarding place, they find not 5 or 6, but 100 or 150 pieces. For example in February 1969, the Rajasthan Minister for Home Affairs in Rajasthan Assembly has stated that 48 persons have been arrested on charges of stealing 200 idols from monuments of Rajasthan; he also added that of these 10 were recovered in Ahmedabad, 10 in Palampur and 152 in Delhi. Delhi seems to be not only the political capital of India but the capital city for smugglers, as their clearing house.

In this connection, I want to know why the Government, in spite of hundreds of idols and sculptures being stolen have so far not prepared a complete documentation of all the priceless sculptures and antiques. It is not as if it is the ingenuity of the idol-smugglers and the international group which is working, it is much more so due to the corrupt officials and the indifference of the Government towards the preservation and protection of the cultural wealth of the country. Smuggling in the form of nylon, gold and watches has been coming in, but this is a smuggling of a reverse order. I do not know whether the Government is taking proper care of this one. The hon. Minister has been toying with the idea that it is a problem of the State, the law and order problem of the State. May I inform the Minister that preservation and protection of monuments of archaeological interest is solely the responsibility of the Centre? Law and order problem comes only after the idol is stolen. To preserve the idol and to protect the monument, the duty is that of the Central Government. If the Central Government feels that it cannot do that, they can transfer this duty of looking after historical monuments to the State Governments. I want to know whether

[Shri Sezhayan]

the Minister is prepared to transfer the work relating to maintenance, preservation, etc. of these ancient monuments to the respective State Governments.

He mentioned that Government are taking the help of Interpol. I want to know whether any antique smuggled out of the country has ever been recovered with the help of the Interpol or any other form of such agency.

Therefore, these are the three specific points I want to know.

First, I want to know why documentation has not been prepared in spite of hundreds of sculptures being stolen out of the country.

Second, I want to know why law and order problem has been brought in, while the duty of protecting and preserving of the ancient monuments is that of the Central Government. I want to know whether Government are going to transfer this to the State Governments.

Thirdly, has Interpol been of help? In how many cases you have recovered the lost items? These are my questions.

SHRI SIDDHARTHA SHANKAR RAY :
Three categorical questions have been put. The first question was about documentation. I have certain figures before me which show that from 1967 on wards there has been a remarkable rise in thefts of art objects and this has doubled since 1967. There has to be a proper documentation in respect of these things. This is a massive task and as the hon. Member will know, this has been going on for some time and we expect that within some reasonable time we shall be able to do this documentation completely.

With regard to the second part, I have made it very clear. It is not my intention simply to say that it is a State matter. If the hon. Member will look at my statement he will see this. In these matters the States and the Centre have to work together, not only for the purpose of preventing these thefts, but also for the purpose of recovering stolen objects. It is for this purpose that a Conference is being held on 30th June in Delhi where the whole matter will be discussed fully and elaborately.

So far as the Interpol organisation is concerned, as the House knows, they work through various crime bureaux in every country. In India the CBI is the crime bureau and they work through various such crime bureaux in various countries. As hon. Member knows, Interpol has been effective and some results had certainly been achieved. It is only proper that we should take advantage of the only international organisation that we have for this kind of thing. We have taken steps to inform the Interpol authorities about the thefts which have taken place.

PROF. S. L. SAKSENA (Maharajganj) : I thank the hon. Minister for his determination to see that these thefts do not occur in future. But, I want to know about one thing. I have got with me a copy of the *Times of India* report, 'The Idol Runners of India' in its issue of the 19th June, 1971. And it says that at least a thousand idols, plates, carpets and jewels have been stolen during the last ten years, and they have all been sold to people outside the country. I would like to know whether our Department of Archaeological Survey has been sleeping all these years. The hon. Minister may be bringing in these new reforms into action now. But what was happening during the last ten years? I think the hon. Minister can give us some information on this. I would like to know why the Department was sleeping over this for so many years.

The *Hindustan Times* in its editorial dated 20th June Says :

"A nation's ancient treasures and monuments are the soul of its history and culture, and then goes on to quote the famous words of Dr. Johnson that "they are parts of a nation's pedigree, make chroniclers of change and refinement as society moved through a process of challenge and response into its current character, its current mores."

I hope the hon. Minister agrees with these sentiments. The hon. Minister is now inspired to action because of the colossal thefts of our antiquities. I would like to know whether Government were sleeping over these theft for the last so many years. It is a very important duty of the Government that the antique treasures of a nation should not be allowed to be stolen away.

The hon. Minister has referred to the State Government's responsibility. This Department is under the control of the Central Government. The State police can certainly help. But primarily, the initiative should be that of the Central Government. For instance, the Chmaba idol is the responsibility of the Central Government and they should take the initiative in recovering it. The State Government can only help with their police. The Centre cannot shift the responsibility to the State Government. I do not want that the hon. Minister should take shelter behind the State Government. If the Central Government are serious to protect their idols, and other antiquities then the State Governments will be glad to help.

The first information report which was lodged with the Himachal Pradesh Police was that an idol worth Rs. 4000 had been stolen. The idol is worth Rs. 70 lakhs, but if it is said in the FIR that an idol worth Rs. 4000 has been stolen, the police will treat it as an ordinary theft ?

So, I would like to know whether the hon. Minister will give this whole inquiry into the theft of Vishnu to the CBI and then ask the State to help them. It is not proper for the States to start investigation and then for the CBI to come forward to help them. If the CBI starts the inquiry first, then I am sure some important things will come to light. What is now being done is not the correct procedure.

I would like the hon. Minister also to inquire into the details of thefts mentioned in the *Times of India* dated the 19th June, wherein there is a long article giving the lists of idols stolen from India and mentioning thousands of cases of thefts of idols at various places during the last ten years. If the hon. Minister does not have the paper, I am prepared to give it to him, and I would like him to inquire into all those cases and see that the stolen antiques are restored to our country and that no more antiques are allowed to be stolen away in future.

I would also like to know whether the Vishnu idol is still in India. There is a report in the *National Herald* to the effect that it is

still in India and some where in Calcutta. I do not know what the truth is. I do not know whether there has been any real search for it in India. If it is in India, then it must be found out and recovered.

SHRI PILOO MODY : It is in India, because God is everywhere.

SHRI SEZHIYAN : The hon. Minister comes from Calcutta, and, therefore, he should know it better.

PROF S. L. SAKSENA : If it is in India, the piece should be recovered. If it has gone to America, then all efforts should be made to restore it to our country, because things taken by theft should not be allowed to be taken possession of by the museums elsewhere. I hope that the hon. Minister will give a categorical answer to my questions.

SHRI SIDDHARTHA SHANKAR RAY : Government fully shares the concern expressed by the hon. Member with regard to the loss of our art objects.

The first thing that he has mentioned is that thousands of our art objects are being stolen, and he has asked what Government are doing about it. I would submit that there are art objects and art objects. I am not trying to defend any organisation or anybody else. But what I am trying to point out is that there are art objects and art objects. There are art objects which are monuments which come within the category protected monuments or protected objects ; there are art objects which have been declared by Government as being eligible to receive Government protection. There are also art objects which do not come within this category at all.

PROF S. L. SAKSENA : I mention art objects coming within the jurisdiction of the Central Government.

SHRI SIDDHARTHA SHANKAR RAY : In so far as art objects which come within the purview of the Archaeological Survey of India are concerned, I shall be very happy to give the hon. Member all the figures which I have with me here. If I start giving those figures here, I think I would take perhaps two to three hours, and Shri Jyotirmoy Basu will

[Shri Siddhartha Shankar Ray]

immediately get up and say that I am taking much more time than I should. So, I would request the hon. Member, when he has got some time, to contact me, and I shall give him all the figures and discuss the matter with him.

The second point which he raised was with regard to the State Government's involvement in the matter.

I thought I had made the position absolutely clear that whereas the protection of ancient monuments and art objects coming within the purview of the Archaeological Survey of India is the responsibility of that department, investigation with regard to thefts of these objects is a matter which has to be taken on by the State police concerned. The State police, in its turn, may seek the assistance of the CBI or it may not. But it is for the State Government to decide whether it should refer any matter to the CBI or not. It is for the purpose of working in greater co-ordination and bringing about cohesion in the working of both the Central and State Governments in these matters that we have called this conference on 30 June. I hope we shall be able to formulate a clear scheme with regard to this matter.

PROF S. L. SAKSENA : The matter is so serious that the CBI has to take the initiative.

SHRI SIDDHARTHA SHANKAR RAY : Unless the matter was serious, the Chief Ministers concerned would not have been written to by me and this conference on 30 June would not have been called.

The last question was whether the stolen Vishnu idol was in India. I have said in my statement that there is no evidence yet to show that it has gone out of India but I hope the hon. member will understand and pardon me if I say that it is not possible for me to disclose any further facts on this matter since the matter is under investigation.

श्री मुस्तियार सिंह मलिक (रोहतक) : स्पीकर साहब, अपने देश में अनेक किरम की चोरियां सुनने में खाई होंगी, लेकिन अब तो

ऐसी विशेष डंग की चोरियां हमारे देश में होने लगी हैं कि भगवान् के घर में भी लोग जाकर घुसने लगे हैं। (अध्यक्ष) लोग भगवान् के घर में घुसने ही नहीं लगे हैं, बल्कि भगवान् को ही उठाकर ले जाने लगे हैं।

अध्यक्ष महोदय : चोर भी तो भगवान् ने ही पैदा किये हैं।

श्री मुस्तियार सिंह मलिक : जैसा कि पहले कहते थे, ऐसा मानूँ होता है कि हमारे देवता डिस्पेयर न होने लगे हों। स्वामोषी सबसे बड़ी जुबान है, लेकिन फिर भी आवाज उठानी पड़ती है। हमारे एजुकेशन मिनिस्टर ने बड़ी मासूम जुबान में कहा कि यह ला एण्ड आर्डर का भी मामला है, लेकिन यह खुशी की बात है कि उन्होंने साथ ही रेसपांसिबिलिटी ओन भी की है और स्टेट्स पर नहीं फेंकी है। मैं उनको बनाना चाहता हूँ कि यह कोई मामूली बात नहीं है, जिसकी जिम्मेदारी स्टेट्स पर फेंक दी जाये। दिल्ली में एक बड़ा जबर्दस्त इंटरनेशनल गैंग बैठा हुआ है। क्या मिनिस्टर साहब के नालेज में यह बात है या नहीं कि यह गैंग मूर्तियों को अमरीका में बेचता है, उनको नेपाल से लाकर सर्टिफिकेट दिखाकर बेचता है, वह एक जबर्दस्त गैंग है, जिसके बहुत से मेम्बरान हैं, जो दिल्ली के बड़े-बड़े होटलों में ठहरते हैं और जो बहुत बड़ी जगहों पर ताल्लुकान रखते हैं? इन सब बातों को देखते हुए यह रेसपांसिबिलिटी स्टेट्स पर नहीं छोड़ी जा सकती है। खुद गवर्नमेंट आफ इंडिया पिक्चर में आती है और इस मामले में उसकी अपनी बड़ी जबर्दस्त जिम्मेदारी है।

यह बड़े अफसोस की बात है कि बिष्णु भगवान् की मूर्ति को पहले चोरी किया जाये, फिर उसको स्मगल किया जाये और उसके बाद उसको बेचा जाये। पहले सुनते थे कि डंगर बिकते हैं। फिर इस देश में विधायक बिकने लगे। अब तो भगवान् बिष्णु भी बिकने लगे हैं। मिनिस्टर साहब ने अपने स्टेटमेंट में बताया है

कि वह इस बारे में कोई ला एनेक्ट करने जा रहे हैं। हमारे देश में कई धार्मिक स्थान बियाबान जंगलों में हैं और बहुत सी आर्ट गैलेरीज हैं। इसके लिए वह लाज जो एनेक्ट करने जा रहे हैं उनको एन्फोर्स करने के लिए क्या खास कदम वह उठायेंगे? साथ में मैं मंत्री महोदय से यह भी पूछना चाहता हूँ कि आया वह इसके अन्दर कोई खास डेट जल्दी से जल्दी मल्लूस कर सकते हैं कि बाइ दैट टाइम दैट ला कैन बी एनैक्टेड ?

तीसरे स्मॉगिंग के मामले में जैसा कि देखने में आया है कुछ पोलिटिकल आदमी इस फन के अन्दर बड़े माहिर हो गये हैं और इस स्मॉगिंग की हालत तो बड़ी ख़ाम अहमियत इस देश के अन्दर रखती है। वैसे एक फ़ैक्ट की बात है कि हिन्दी व्याकरण के अन्दर अभी तक तीन लिंग थे—

पुंलिंग स्त्रीलिंग और नपुंसक लिंग, लेकिन अब हिन्दी व्याकरण को भी बदल कर एक और चौथा लिंग उसमें बढ़ा दिया—स्मॉगिंग। कुछ ऐसे सियासतवां लोग हैं जिनकी सियासत चलती नहीं बिना स्मॉगिंग के। तो मैं मंत्री महोदय से अर्ज करना चाहता हूँ कि वह इस चीज के अन्दर देखें, जैसे कि एक मेरे आनरेबल फ्रेंड उनकी नोटिस में कुछ नाम बताना चाहते हैं और इसके अन्दर कुछ पोलिटिकल पार्टीज का भी हाथ हो सकता है। वह यह अश्योरेंस हाउस के अन्दर देने को तैयार है या नहीं कि इसके अन्दर कोई पोलिटिकल इंटरफ़ेयरेंस बर्दास्त नहीं की जायेगी ?

SHRI SIDDHARTHA SHANKAR RAY :
Three questions have been asked. The first question relates to what I had stated with regard to this also being a part of the law and order problem. No matter how the hon. Member may try to emphasize the point, the laws of the country are very clear. A case of theft is a matter within the jurisdiction of the State Government concerned, and the Centre cannot possibly interfere in that. And I will repeat that we have called this conference on

the 30th June for the purpose of formulating specific plans so that these thefts can be properly investigated and the stolen objects recovered.

So far as the new law is concerned, I have already said that a Bill for the purpose will be introduced in this House, and I hope that during this session or the next, the Bill become law. The hon. Member hoped that the Government would enforce the law. The Government will certainly enforce the law, the law try to enforce the law which is passed by this House, but I am sure that this great House, will also be very vigilant in this matter, for a Government can only be as vigil as the Parliament to which it is responsible.

With regard to the third matter, the hon. Member perhaps raised this question more in jest than in seriousness, because he went into the question of political smuggling and all the rest of it which has nothing to do with the calling attention notice before the House. I do not think he really wants me to answer it.

श्री मुस्तियार सिंह मलिक : उसके लिए ला जो एनेक्ट करने जा रहे हैं उसके अन्दर एक नो आबजेक्शन सर्टिफिकेट और लगा दें (व्यवधान).....

SHRI SIDHARTHA SHANKAR RAY :
When the Bill comes, he can put in an amendment.

12.55 hrs.

RE: PASSING OF THE MAINTENANCE OF INTERNAL SECURITY BILL

SHRI PILOO MODY (Godhra) : Have I your permission to make a brief statement ?

MR. SPEAKER : On what matter ?

SHRI PILOO MODY : On the matter of the passing of the Maintenance of Internal Security Bill. I have given you notice. On Friday evening at the end of the debate there was a great deal of noise and the entire opposition except myself walked out.

SHRI C. M. STEPHEN (Muvattupuzha) :
I rise on a point of order. There are certain rules..