

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
TOURISM AND CULTURE
LOK SABHA**

STARRED QUESTION NO:190

ANSWERED ON:15.12.2003

THEFT OF ANTIQUES

BIR SING MAHATO;HARIBHAI PARTHIBHAI CHAUDHARY

Will the Minister of TOURISM AND CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether CBI has unearthed a huge racket in the recent past involved in stealing and selling of priceless antique items from the country's museums and temples;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the steps the Government proposes to take for the safety and preservation of these rare antique items?

Answer

MINISTER FOR TOURISM AND CULTURE (SHRI JAGMOHAN)

(a) (b) & (c) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement referred to in reply to part (a) to (c) of Lok Sabha Starred Question No.190 for 15.12.2003 regarding Theft of Antiques

As reported by Central Bureau of Investigation, during the last year i.e. 2002 CBI EOU-VIII Branch which deals with the cases of antiquities has registered two cases viz. RCs 2/2002 and 3/2002 EOU-VIII relating to theft of priceless antique idols from temples of Atamkur, Distt. Nellore (Andhra Pradesh) and Jagannath Puri (Orissa) respectively. During the year 2003 till date no case relating to stealing and selling of priceless antique items from the country's museums and temples has been registered by the Central Bureau of Investigation.

A huge racket has been unearthed by the Rajasthan Police in the recent past. According to the information received from the Government of Rajasthan, in the year 2001-2002, 38 stolen antique idols were recovered and 31 accused persons were arrested in this connection by the Rajasthan Police. Subsequently in June, 2003 raids were conducted at various places and 791 idols and other art objects were recovered. 21 accused persons including one Vaman Narayan Ghiya, suspected to king pin of the racket, were arrested in this connection. Stolen objects recovered were examined by the Archaeological Survey of India and out of 791 objects examined 705 were declared as Antiquities under section 24 of the Antiquities and Art Treasures Act, 1972. Charge sheets have been filed by the Rajasthan Police against 19 accused persons including Ghiya in the Court of Law and regarding other accused persons investigations are on by the Rajasthan Police.

Steps have been taken by the Archaeological Survey of India in consultation with the law enforcing agencies like the Central Bureau of Investigation, Customs, Directorate of Revenue Intelligence and the State Government Police to check thefts of antiquities and their smuggling by stepping up vigilance and intensifying checking at the customs exit-channels as well as enforcement of the Antiquities and Art Treasures Act, 1972. Other measures include announcement of National Mission on Antiquities and consideration of amendments in the Antiquities and Art Treasures Act, 1972 to make it more effective.