

**Railway Infrastructure to Connect Arunachal Pradesh**

2980. SHRI VIJAY JAWAHARLAL DARDA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government is aware that China has started work on extending its rail link upto Nyangtri which is located on the border with Arunachal Pradesh;
- (b) if so, whether China has been claiming that Nyangtri prefecture includes some parts of Arunachal Pradesh; and
- (c) whether Government is planning to build railway infrastructure which would connect rest of the country with Arunachal Pradesh right up to its border with China?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMED): (a) to (c) Government is aware that China is developing rail links in the border regions opposite India in the Tibet Autonomous Region, including the proposed extension of the Qinghai-Tibet Railway line upto Nyingchi. Government is giving careful and special attention to the development of infrastructure in the border areas opposite China, in order to meet our strategic and security requirements and also to facilitate the economic development of these areas. This includes the States of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh. Government keeps a constant watch on all developments having a bearing on India's security and takes all necessary measures to safeguard it.

**Destruction of images of Hindu Gods in Maldives**

2981. SHRI BALBIR PUNJ: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether recently in February this year, a mob of religious extremists destroyed images, mostly of Buddha and Hindu Gods, kept in Maldives national museum;
- (b) if so, whether 99 per cent of the Maldives' pre-Islamic artifacts belonging to period before the Twelfth century, when most inhabitants were Buddhist or Hindu, were also destroyed;
- (c) if so, whether this issue has been raised with the Government of Maldives;
- (d) if so, the details thereof; and
- (e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMED): (a) to (e) There have been reports that some artifacts at the National Museum in Male, Maldives, belonging to the pre-Islamic era in Maldives, were damaged or destroyed in incidents of violence in February 2012. The matter was taken up by the External Affairs Minister with the Foreign Minister of Maldives during latter's visit to India on 3 April 2012. Earlier, during his visit to Maldives on 15 & 16 February 2012, the Foreign Secretary had also taken up the matter with the President of Maldives and conveyed our concerns. The President of Maldives had indicated that the damage and destruction to the artifacts in the National Museum would be inquired into.

#### **Purchase of Gifts By Ministry**

2982. SHRI RAJEEV CHANDRASEKHAR: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to media reports about purchase of substandard gifts for presenting it to foreign dignitaries by the President, Prime Minister and other high-ranking officials, at inflated rates;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether Government has conducted any enquiry into the matter; and
- (d) if so, the details thereof and the action taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMED): (a) Yes.

(b) It came to the notice of the Ministry in May 2011 that some of the gifts being procured by the Protocol Division of the Ministry were not of the desired quality and specification.

(c) and (d) A preliminary inquiry was conducted into the matter by the Ministry which could not establish *prima facie* any involvement or complicity of officials of the Ministry. A detailed investigation into the matter has thereafter been entrusted to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). The enquiry by CBI is ongoing.

#### **Programmes Conducted by ICCR**

2983. SHRI ANIL MADHAV DAVE: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) the programmes conducted by Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) to promote Indian culture abroad;