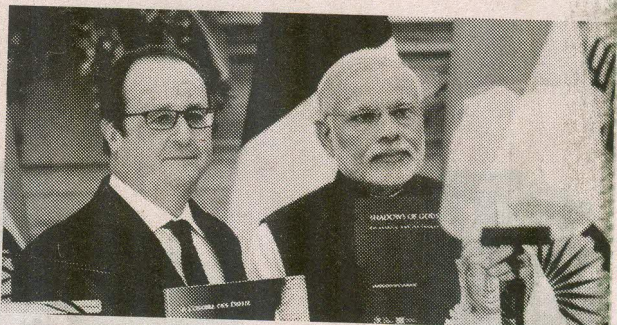


# Photo Archive Valuable in Preserving Indian Heritage

Express News Service

**Puducherry:** A collection of 1,35,000 photographs archived by the French Institute of Pondicherry (IFP) and the Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient (EPFO) (French School of Asian Studies) that was started in 1956 has become a valuable tool for tracing stolen idols and art helping to convict international traffickers who pillage Indian heritage. The photographs are a unique resource of visual information of South India in second half of twentieth century, that focuses on temple art.

A book released jointly by PM Modi and the French President Hollande on January 26 in New Delhi traces in detail how photographic evidence from this archive led to the arrest of Subhash Chandra Kapoor, a New York-based art dealer and



French President Francois Hollande and Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the book launch in New Delhi on Tuesday

one of the most high-profile smugglers of antiquities.

The book authored by Gopinath Sricandane, titled “Shadows of Gods: An Archive and Its Images” co-published by the IFP and EPFO details how idol thefts at the Brihadeeswarar temple, Sripuranthan, and the Sri Varadaraja Perumal temple in the village of Suthamalli were orchestrated by Kapoor and goes on to detail

how the statues eventually made their way to the foremost art galleries around the world, through Kapoor’s vast and elaborate smuggling network. The bronze statue of Nataraja smuggled out from the Sripuranthan temple, which eventually found its way to Australia was recently returned to India by the Australian Government based on evidence provided by the IFP photo archives.