

US Team on Idol Trail Studies Photographs

Visits French Institute of Puducherry, goes through digital data

Express News Service

Puducherry: Three Homeland Security officers of the United States on Monday visited the French Institute of Pondicherry (Institut Francais de Pondichery) and went through the digitalised database of the photographs of idols in the possession of the institute.

Sources at the institute said the officers compared the photographs of some of the idols stolen from temples of the region and sold in US, which were seized by the American security officials. Also, the sources said officials sought the details of the idols from the database of the institute to correlate with the facts they possessed.

The sources added that the

US officials had arrested Subash Kapoor, one of the criminals involved in the smuggling of idols from India. Now the process of identification of temples in Tamil Nadu from where the idols were stolen is being carried out by the US officials.

The three-member US team consisted of Brendon M Easter, John Paul Labbot and Rangarajan Gopalan.

The French Institute is almost on the verge of completion of the digitalisation of 1,36,000 black and white negatives of photographs of idols from various temples in the country. The institute has a total documented collection of 1.50 lakh photographs of these idols from various temples.

The documentation of the

Institute includes idols of nearly 3,000 temples in Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Puducherry and important temples from other parts of the country.

According to sources, the documentation helped the police and Interpol identify certain idols stolen and smuggled to United States and Australia.

Meanwhile, Dr M Murugesan, an official from the institute, revealed that the Interpol could identify the idols, stolen from Sripurantan and Suttamalli temples in Ariyalur, based on the photographs provided by the institute. These idols had reached the United States and were then sold off to Australian museums by the smugglers.