

Indian government says it will not hand over remains of Mother Teresa

CALCUTTA, India – India will not yield to Albania's request to hand over the remains of Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta, an Indian government spokesman confirmed.

Mother Teresa was "an Indian citizen and she is resting in her own country, her own land," the Indian Express newspaper quoted Vishnu Prakash, spokesman for the Ministry for External Affairs, as saying in its Oct. 13 edition. "The question of returning her remains does not arise at all."

The government comments followed international media reports that Albanian Prime Minister Sali Berisha had asked the Indian government to hand over the remains of the ethnic Albanian nun for the 100th anniversary of her birth next August.

Sister Christy, a member of the Missionaries of Charity, the religious order founded by Mother Teresa, told the Asian church news agency UCA News that her congregation had not heard anything about such a demand officially but had seen the media reports. She dismissed such reports as "speculations" and added that the nuns would not comment on them.

Mother Teresa was born to an ethnic Albanian family in Skopje, in what is now part of Macedonia. She came to India in 1929 and became an Indian citizen in 1947.

The late nun based her life and work in Calcutta. Following her death in 1997 she was buried inside the headquarters of her congregation in this eastern Indian city.