

Hymns at temple to prevent slaughter of Shambo the bull

A large number of Hindu families from all over Britain, Switzerland and New Zealand gathered early Thursday at the Skanda Vale temple in west Wales and began singing 'bhajans' to prevent authorities from taking away Shambo, the 'sacred' bull, for slaughter.

Authorities were scheduled to arrive at the temple and collect the six-year-old bull for slaughter at 8 a.m. GMT. Temple priests and Hindu activists were present in strength while cars had been placed along the approach lane to the temple.

Priests said that the authorities would have to stop their bhajan singing and desecrate the temple to reach Shambo, placed in an enclosure towards the back of the temple near Carmarthen in west Wales.

The issue has turned into one between religion and state. Hindu groups that have campaigned and mounted legal challenges argue that killing the animal would go against their religion and the right to practice their religion.

The official view is that the animal has tested positive for bovine TB, and as per rules needs to be put down to prevent the disease from spreading to other cattle. Every year, thousands of cattle are destroyed to prevent the spread of disease. Veterinary and farming groups in Wales support the government decision to slaughter Shambo.

The Court of Appeal this week upheld the Welsh government's order to put it down in line with animal health regulations.

Brother Michael of the temple said: 'The news could not be worse for the temple and Hindus around the world. For the last three months or so we have looked at every conceivable option to find an alternative to killing.'

'Unfortunately, the Welsh assembly has been so blinkered that it can only see destruction. The assembly and the National Farmers Union have contrived to misinform the public as to the extent of the problem.'

He added: 'We are holding a pooja in the morning, praying for the life of Shambo and the sanctity of all life. Our religious laws prevent us from assisting in the killing of any life and so we will not help the inspectors remove Shambo.'

'He will remain in his enclosure and they will have to physically desecrate a temple and an act of worship to get him. As registered place of worship we will undertake our legal right to worship God. The Welsh assembly government will have to interrupt an act of worship.'

An assembly spokesperson said: 'This has been a difficult case for all involved, but our aim continues to be the protection of human and animal health. We appeal to the community to cooperate fully in order to minimise distress to the animal, and to ensure the safety of all concerned.'

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