

### **April Snowfall Hampers Kedarnath Road Repair, But Famous Hindu Shrine Will Still Reopen Next Month**

Source

INDIA, April 20, 2014 (Daily Mail): Heavy snowfall accompanied by rainfall since Saturday night has hampered reconstruction work at flood-hit Kedarnath in Rudraprayag district. Presently a Special Task Force (STF) team, comprising Nehru Institute of Mountaineering (Uttarkashi) and the Uttarakhand Police, is engaged in constructing a trek road to the famous Hindu shrine, which will reopen on May 4. Preparations are underway to restore tourist facilities in Kedarnath, which includes creating a trek route, helipad ground, fixing water supply, electricity and other basic amenities.

Devotees in large numbers visit Kedarnath from different parts of India to offer tributes to Lord Shiva. But the flow of tourists has seen a drastic decline ever since last year's devastating flash-flood.

Till last year, the trek for Kedarnath used to start from Gaurikund but this time the pilgrims will have to walk an additional distance because of the slow reconstruction work. Located at a height of 11,750 ft., pilgrims visiting Kedarnath will have to use a new 4.3 mile pedestrian road from Rambara onwards to reach the shrine. The

earlier trek connecting Rambara to Kedarnath has been abandoned. But the trek connecting Rambara to Gaurikund will more or less remain the same.

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### **Vedic Cultural Centre Launches English Translations Of Vedas**

Source

MARKHAM, CANADA, April 6, 2014 (Weekly Voice): Keeping in line with the principles of Arya Samaj to disseminate and propagate Aryan values as propounded by the Vedas, Arya Samaj of Markham and Arya Samaj of Toronto jointly launched an English translation of the Four Vedas in eight volumes covering eight thousand pages, flown directly from India for this most auspicious occasion, coinciding with the celebration of 139th Anniversary of the

founding of Arya Samaj in India by Maharshi Dayanand in 1875 A.D.

The Himalayan task of translating the most sacred Vedic religious scriptures in Canada was done by a renowned octogenarian, Indo-Canadian Vedic scholar, Dr. Tulasi Ram Sharma (formerly Professor of English in Delhi University), author of many books and articles on Vedic literature, culture and heritage. Dr. Tulasi Ram Sharma was honored with a plaque for his outstanding achievement

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## **Kedarnath Shrine Reopens for Devotees On Sunday**

Source

DEHRADUN, INDIA, May 4, 2014 (India Today): Sacred portals of the Kedarnath temple were reopened to devotees amid

elaborate rituals early on Sunday morning, about a year after the Himalayan shrine was marred by flash floods that had left thousands of people dead and many others stranded. Chief priest of the shrine (Rawal) Bhima Shankar Ling presided over the rituals as its gates were opened amid chanting of Vedic hymns. About 1,252 devotees including eight foreign nationals visited the shrine on the opening day.

It is the first Char Dham yatra (to four sacred places in the Himalayas: Kedarnath, Gangotri, Badrinath and Yamnotri) after last year's calamity. The annual pilgrimage was struck by the unprecedented flash floods last year causing large-scale loss of lives and property. Over 5,000 people were dead or missing, including pilgrims from various parts of the country.

Expressing happiness over the first day turnout, Committee CEO V.D Singh said it was much more than their expectations. "The crowd was bigger than expected and there was much enthusiasm among the devotees. It is an indication that the fear psychosis gripping people outside the state in the wake of last years tragedy is subsiding gradually. "The crowd of visitors is likely to swell as the snow begins to melt," he said.

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## **15,000 turn Up For Gangotri, Yamnotri Re-Opening**

Source

DEHRADUN, INDIA, May 3, 2014 (Times Of India): Last year's mid-June flash floods did not deter 15,000-odd devotees from

across the country from converging at Yamnotri and Gangotri shrines in Uttarkashi district to attend the sacred ceremony marking the re-opening of these shrines' portals. With this, the Char Dham yatra has commenced in Uttarakhand.

Amid chanting of Vedic mantras, the doors of Gangotri and Yamnotri were re-opened at 12:01 pm and 1:20 pm, respectively minutes after their "doli" (palanquin in which the statues are carried) reached the temples from their winter abode at Mukhba and Kharsali villages in the district. The winter abode of Goddess Ganga is located at a distance of about 9 miles from Gangotri shrine and 6 miles from Yamnotri shrine.

Residents in Mukhba and Kharsali villages consider Goddess Ganga and Goddess Yamuna as their daughters. On Thursday, with moist eyes, they accorded a ceremonial send-off to the two statuess, respectively in their doli decked with flowers. When contacted, devotees at Gangotri and Yamnotri said they had to trek for several miles on the 20 mile Badkot-Jangalchatti and the 15.5 mile Gangori-Sukhi motorable roads to reach Yamnotri and Gangotri shrines, as they are still being re-constructed.

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## **New Zealand Youth Hold Conference**

Source

NEW ZEALAND, March 13, 2014 (Indian News Link): The younger members of the Hindu community have called on their peers

to realize the power inherent in them and seek self-inspiration to bring about quality changes in lifestyle and promote a better society.

Organized jointly by the Hindu Youth New Zealand and the New Zealand Hindu Students Forum, the Conference held under the theme, "Dynamic You: The Power of Youth" attracted 150 participants. Among them were university students, professionals and entrepreneurs with a passion for Hindu values.

The conference, held on March 1 at Aotea Centre in Auckland's Central Business District, was the third in an annual series. It brought together young men and women from both sides of the Tasman. It was an event that channelized the enthusiasm and exuberance of the younger members of the society, providing them a platform for exchange of ideas and information, and more importantly, find ways and means of assimilating the Hindu way of life.

Murali Magesan, who undertook various responsibilities for the annual gathering, said in his keynote address that Hindu youth can be the leading light of the multicultural, multi-religious and multilingual community of New Zealand, provided they harnessed their capabilities for the common good. "There are about 80,000 Hindus in New Zealand, accounting for about 2% of the population. As a group, we are significantly more qualified compared to the rest of the population. It is heartening that a high percentage of Hindus are highly successful professionals in this country," he said.

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## Indian Railway Starts Pilgrim Train from Chennai to Nepal

Source

KOLKATA, INDIA, May 5, 2014 (Times Of India): After offering tour packages to popular destinations like Thailand, Singapore and Malaysia, Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) has launched a tourist train from Chennai to Nepal, primarily aimed at pilgrims from south India. Those opting for this tour will be taken around Hindu and Buddhist pilgrimage destinations in north India and Nepal.

It will be an exclusive AC tourist train for a round trip from Chennai, covering Allahabad, Varanasi (Kasi), Ayodhya, Kathmandu, Manakamana, Pokhara and Kushinagar. The train will start from Chennai Central on May 11 and return on May 23. The train will pass through Vijaywada and Warangal for the benefit of pilgrims from Andhra Pradesh.

The tour includes travel by the AC Tourist Train, AC hotel accommodation at places where night stay will be required, buses for transfers and sightseeing, on-board and off-board vegetarian catering, services of tour escort and security. In this trip, the tourists will get an opportunity to bathe in the Triveni Sangam (confluence of rivers Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati) in Allahabad, visit the famous Vishwanath temple and Visalakshi temple in Varanasi (Kasi), visit Pashupathinath Temple, Swayambhunath (a Buddhist Temple) and Budha Nilkantha (Lord Vishnu) temple in Kathmandu.

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## Hindu Temple Consecrated In Washington State

Source

BOTHELL, WASHINGTON, May 14, 2014 (The Republic): When yellow-robed priests pulled back the burgundy curtain of a shrine inside the Hindu Temple and Cultural Center in Bothell, more than a thousand people who had squeezed into the smoke-filled building let out tears and gasps of joy. It was the crowd's first glimpse of not just the temple's first formally consecrated statue, but the nation's first formally consecrated Hindu temple shrine in the Pacific Northwest.

Indian craftsmen called shilpis, descended from generations of other temple craftsmen, had spent six months molding the statue's shrine. The Deity itself was hand-sculpted in India out of black granite. Finally, after three days of rituals last weekend called Kumbabhishekam, the Deity Prasanna Venkateshwara was brought to life. Related to Vishnu, preserver of life in the universe, the Deity will play a key role in formal rituals performed at the shrine.

"This is a 27-year-old dream come true," said Mani Vadari, chairman of the HTCC's board, who first worshipped with other Hindus in church basements, rented spaces and homes when he came to the Seattle area in the 1980s. The group he worshipped with then consisted of fewer than 100 families. Today, that number has ballooned, largely due to an influx of Indian software engineers who have immigrated to the area. From 2000

to 2012, U.S. Census data show the Indian population in King, Snohomish and Pierce counties of Washington State nearly tripled from about 20,000 to 59,000

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## **Court Advisor Recommends Padmanabhaswamy Temple Priests be paid \$8,500 per month**

Source

KERALA, INDIA, May 15, 2014 (Times Of India): [HPI Note: The logic behind the advisor's recommendation is not explained in this widely circulated article and remains something of a mystery.]

The best graduates from IITs and IIMs dream of the salary amicus curiae Gopal Subramaniam has recommended for head priests of Sree Padmanabhaswamy temple in Thiruvananthapuram. In his report to the Supreme Court on management of the temple, which shot into the limelight after wealth estimated at US\$17 billion was discovered, Subramaniam listed the hierarchy of priests with thantris at the top followed by periyambis, panchakavyathunambi, thakkadam and thiruvambadi nambis. He said the thantris should be paid US\$8,500 (rupees five lakh) per month.

Starting with the thantris, the amicus said none of the four main priests reside within the temple complex. This is because their earnings from conducting rituals in the temple were meagre which forced them to perform rituals outside. He said their

residential quarters too were in dilapidated condition. "It is submitted that an amount that is proportional to the stature of the thantris should be fixed by the temple authorities, preferably a sum of \$8,500, to be paid according to the directions of the (head) thantri," the report said.

Subramaniam said the salaries of the four periyambis, the high priests who maintain celibacy during their tenure in the temple to perform archana and offer worship to the deity, was worse. "The salaries of nambis are very low, around \$213 per month and they are not entitled to emoluments being temporary staff," he said and provided a graded salary structure for them as per their status in the conduct of rituals in the temple. The amicus recommended to the apex court that "archana commission can be fixed at 7% after consultation with the temple authorities and the salary of the periyambi should be around \$1,500 per month". "The panchakavyathunambi should be paid \$1,365 per month as salary while thakkadam and thiruvambadi nambis should receive \$1,025 per month," he said

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Ph. 28132790, 28131232