

## Duration of Shri Amarnathji Yatra-2012

# **SASB clarifies the position**

**JAMMU, FEBRUARY 29** - Reacting to certain media reports, in regard to the duration of Shri Amarnathji Yatra this year, the Chief Executive Officer of the Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board, Shri R. K. Goyal said that there is need to appreciate that the variation in Yatra duration from year to year is on account of Raksha Bandhan falling on different dates and, as per the ongoing tradition, the Yatra concludes on this date. In this context, he said that two years ago we were able to have a Yatra duration of 56 days as in that year the Raksha Bandhan fell on 24<sup>th</sup> August, 2010. The next year, in 2011, Raksha Bandhan was on 13<sup>th</sup> August and, consequently the Yatra duration was reduced by 10 days, to a total of 46 days. And this year, in 2012, Raksha Bandhan falls on 2<sup>nd</sup> August, and the Yatra duration has been further reduced to 39 days, as it is not at all possible to prepone the commencement date because the tracks to the Shrine have heavy snow which takes time to be cleared.

The CEO stated that the Shrine Board is obligated to take into account all relevant considerations while deciding the Yatra commencement date every year as the safety and security of the Yatris is the foremost responsibility of the Shrine Board. In this context, the CEO added that keeping in view the sentiments of the devotees, the Board has this year specifically decided to explore the possibility of preponement of Yatra before 25<sup>th</sup> June, based on a professional assessment of the pace of snow-melt, which shall be undertaken in the first week of June, 2012.

The CEO further said that in 2013 Raksha Bandhan would fall on 21<sup>st</sup> August and, consequently, the Yatra would be 19 days longer than in 2012, if the commencement date is the same in both these years. The CEO said that it is not logical to attribute the variations in the duration of the Yatra, from year to year, to the decision making processes of the Board.

On this occasion, the CEO recalled that Shrine Board had set up a sub-Committee chaired by H. H. Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, an eminent and world known person, to advise the Board regarding the duration and schedule of Shri Amarnathji Yatra. He stressed that this sub-Committee was set up consequent to an agreement with the BABA Yatri Niyas in June, 2011. This sub-Committee comprised eminent persons viz. Swami Avdheshanandji of Haridwar, Swami Gyaanandji of Vrindavan, Shri Y.V. Sharma, President, Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Jammu, Shri R.L. Bharti, formerly Member, J&K Public Service Commission, Shri Prem Gupta, IPS (Retd.), formerly IGP, Jammu, Dr. C.M. Raina, Asstt. Professor, Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan, Jammu and Shri R.K. Goyal, CEO was its Member-Secretary. He said that the sub-Committee while

evolving its recommendations had held extensive consultations with various interested parties, including BABA Yatri Niyas.

The CEO said that the Shrine Board, set up through a legislative enactment, comprises eminent persons from varied fields, works within the provisions of the J&K Shri Amarnathji Shrine Act (2000) and is not subject to any influence.

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