

Lieutenant Governor chairs 39th meeting of Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board

Srinagar, July 21: Lieutenant Governor, Girish Chandra Murmu, Chairman of the Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board (SASB), presided over 39th Board meeting of the Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board **today** in which the Board members participated virtually through video conference to discuss the conduct of the Yatra 2020.



The meeting was attended by Shri B.V.R. Subrahmanyam, Chief Secretary; Shri Bipul Pathak, CEO SASB; Shri Anup Kumar Soni, Addl CEO SASB & senior officers of Shrine Board. Threadbare discussion was held on the current circumstances of COVID-19 pandemic and its likely impact on the Yatra.

The Board discussed the Hon'ble Supreme Court order dated 13.07.2020 in which, the decision to conduct the Yatra was left to the Administration/ Government after assessing the ground realities prevailing in Jammu & Kashmir.

The Board was informed that the arrangements were on track since **February 2020**, but due to nationwide lockdown and pandemic, State Executive Committee, J&K has still continued to keep religious places and places of worship closed for the public. These prohibitions continue till 31st July.

The Board further discussed that pandemic has put the health administration system to its limit. The spike has been particularly very sharp in July. Health Workers and Security Forces are also getting infected and the focus of entire Medical, Civil and Police Administration at the moment is on containing the local transmission of the COVID-19 pandemic. **The health concerns are so serious that the strain on the health system, along with the diversion in resources to the Yatra, will be immense. This would also unnecessarily put the Yatris at risk of catching the COVID-19.**

The Board also discussed the decision of High court of J&K in Writ Petition (No CM No. 3022/2020 in WP(C) PIL No 5/2020 in which the Court directed SASB to take a final view in light of order of Hon'ble Supreme court dated 13.07.2020 and keeping in view the compliance of **all healthcare protocols, Standard Operating Protocols notified by the Central Government as well as by the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir.**

The Board further deliberated the considered views of the Government. The Government made reasoned observations supported by facts which suggested that it would not be advisable to conduct Shri Amarnathji Yatra 2020 and it would be advisable to cancel it this year in larger public interest. This would enable the Health, Civil and Police Administrations to focus on the immediate challenges facing them rather than diverting resources, manpower and attention to the conduct of the Shri Amarnathji Yatra.

Based upon the circumstances, the Board decided with heavy heart that it is not advisable to hold and conduct this year's Shri Amarnathji Yatra and expressed its regret to announce the cancellation of Yatra 2020. The Board is aware of and respects the sentiments of millions of devotees and to keep the religious sentiments alive, the Board shall continue the Live Telecast/ Virtual Darshan of the morning and evening Aarti. Further, the traditional rituals shall be carried out as per past practice. Also, the Chhadi Mubarak shall be facilitated by the Government.