



Roopkund Lake: In Peril Due to Climate Change | Uttarakhand | 15 Oct 2024

Why in News?

Recently, the famous [Roopkund Lake in Uttarakhand](#), known for its centuries-old human skeletons, is shrinking as [climate change](#) affects its size and [ecosystem](#).

Key Points

- **Roopkund Lake:**
 - The **skeletons found in Roopkund** are believed to date back to the **9th century**.
 - **Genetic studies** indicate that these individuals came from diverse groups, including a **Mediterranean lineage**.
 - Theories suggest they were either pilgrims or traders who perished during a sudden **hailstorm**, with massive hailstones being the possible cause of death.
- **Scientific Studies on Roopkund's Skeletons:**
 - Modern research has uncovered **DNA** traces from multiple ethnicities, some as recent as the **19th century**, suggesting Roopkund may have been visited over a prolonged period.
 - Researchers believe that **Roopkund** was once a sacred site, and the pilgrims likely traveled long distances before meeting their demise in this isolated, **high-altitude lake**.
- **Environmental Impact of Climate Change:**
 - The decline in glacier size, altered **monsoon patterns**, and **erratic snowfall** have caused a reduction in water levels at **Roopkund**.
 - Changes in temperature and weather are affecting the **region's flora and fauna**, contributing to the ecological imbalance around the lake.
- **Tourism and Conservation Challenges:**
 - Roopkund's reduced size and environmental degradation are making it harder to preserve the lake's unique history and ecological significance.
 - There are growing concerns that unchecked tourism and insufficient conservation efforts may exacerbate the damage caused by climate change.



Chardham Project in Uttarakhand | Uttarakhand | 15 Oct 2024

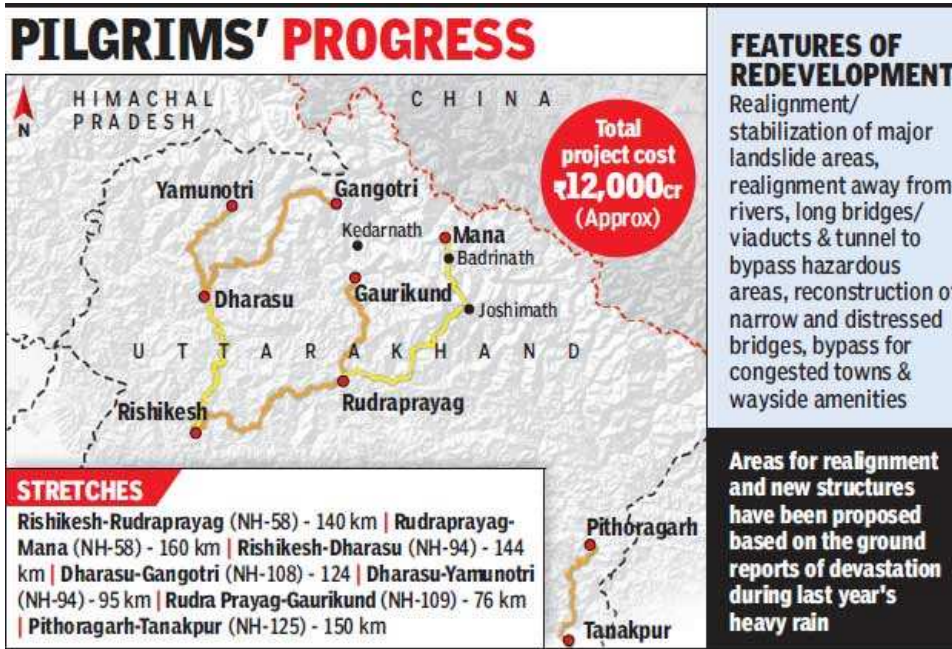
Why in News?

Recently, the Centre informed the [Supreme Court](#) that **75%** of the work on the [Chardham Project](#), designed to improve connectivity to four major pilgrimage sites in Uttarakhand, has been completed.

Key Points

- **Chardham Project:**
 - The project involves the construction of a **900-kilometer all-weather road** to provide better connectivity to [Yamunotri, Gangotri, Kedarnath, and Badrinath](#).
 - The project is strategically important as it extends to regions near the China border.
 - The new highways will make travel easier and safer, especially **during monsoons and winter**, when the existing roads become prone to landslides and blockages.
- **Oversight Committee:**
 - The Supreme Court had previously formed an **oversight committee** headed by retired Supreme Court judge **Justice A.K. Sikri** to address environmental concerns.
 - The committee has submitted **two reports** to the Supreme Court, one in April 2024 and another on **27th August, 2024**, assessing the project's progress and compliance with guidelines.
- **Environmental Concerns and Court Orders:**
 - The project faced opposition due to environmental concerns related to the sensitive [Himalayan ecosystem](#).
 - In **December 2021**, the Supreme Court allowed **double-lane widening** of the Chardham Highway but placed oversight responsibilities on the Sikri-led committee to mitigate environmental damage.
 - The oversight committee **does not have the mandate to conduct a fresh [environmental impact assessment](#)** but monitors the execution of the project.
- **Support from Government Ministries:**

- The committee has the complete backing of the Ministries of **Defence, Road Transport, and Environment**.
- The **Uttarakhand Government** and local district magistrates are also cooperating with the committee.
- Representatives from the [National Environmental Research Institute](#) and the [Forest Research Institute \(Dehradun\)](#) are part of the environmental oversight mechanism.



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