



Pilgrims Death During Char Dham Yatra 2024

Why in News?

In 2024, the 192-day [Char Dham Yatra](#) in Uttarakhand, encompassing the **high-altitude shrines of Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri, and Yamunotri, saw the unfortunate **loss of 246 pilgrims** due to health-related complications.**

Key Points

- As per Uttarakhand government data, over **47,03,905 pilgrims participated in the Char Dham Yatra**, which **started on 10th May 2024** and is scheduled **to conclude on 17th November 2024**.
 - Deaths exceeded **230 in 2023**, while in **2022, the count was over 300**.
- **Helicopter Travel and Health Risks:**
 - A high death rate was noted among pilgrims using helicopters to reach the Kedarnath shrine. **Rapid ascent to high altitudes** (about 3,000 meters) **without acclimatization increases health risks**.
 - **Oxygen depletion** at all Char Dham shrines can lead to **altitude sickness**, which can become fatal if not managed promptly.
 - Issues such as **inadequate accommodation, trail congestion, extreme and shifting weather conditions**, and insufficient health screenings.
- **Economic Impact of the Char Dham Yatra:**
 - The yatra **generates approximately Rs 7,500 crore annually**, a significant portion of Uttarakhand's economy.
 - The yatra **provides direct and indirect employment to over 10 lakh people**, including hotel staff, guides, taxi drivers, priests, mule operators, porters, and others in the tourism and handicraft sectors.
- **Criticism and Concerns:**
 - Although the State mandated health check-ups for pilgrims this year, the high fatality rate has raised concerns.
 - Think tanks like [NITI Aayog](#) have repeatedly called for [sustainable tourism practices in the Indian Himalayan region](#), urging the State to align with these standards.

Char Dham Yatra

- **Yamunotri Dham:**
 - **Location:** Uttarkashi district.
 - **Dedicated to:** Goddess Yamuna.
 - River Yamuna is the second-most sacred river in India after River Ganga.
- **Gangotri Dham:**
 - **Location:** Uttarkashi district.
 - **Dedicated to:** Goddess Ganga.
 - Considered the most sacred of all Indian rivers.
- **Kedarnath Dham:**
 - **Location:** Rudraprayag district.
 - **Dedicated to:** Lord Shiva.
 - Situated on the bank of the Mandakini River.

- One of the 12 Jyotirlingas (divine representations of Lord Shiva) in India.

▪ **Badrinath Dham:**

- **Location:** Chamoli district.
- Home to the sacred Badrinarayan Temple.
- **Dedicated to:** Lord Vishnu.
- One of the holy shrines for Vaishnavites.

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