

Century-old religious fair begins in Himachal

A three-day fair to mark the journey of Hindu goddess Shoolini, the presiding deity of this Himachal town, to the abode of her elder sister goddess Durga began here Friday with a colourful procession.

Hundreds of devotees flocked to goddess Shoolini's temple to seek blessings and then accompanied her bedecked palanquin to the temple of goddess Durga. The fair will conclude with a procession bringing the deity back to her own temple after three days.

It is believed that the fair was started about a century ago by the ruler of the erstwhile princely state of Baghat to promote trade and cultural activities in the region.

However, this time the procession was taken out without the idol of goddess Shoolini. Two of the centuries-old eight metallic idols of the goddess and seven crowns were stolen from the temple in April.

On the same night, thieves also stole idols and valuables from a temple in Rajgarh town, about 50 km from here. In May, ancient coins and silver artefacts were stolen from the Suryavanshi temple in Kullu district.

Two Nepalis are believed to have masterminded the thefts and fled across the border.

Solan Senior Superintendent of Police S.P.S. Verma told IANS that police teams have been sent to Nepal to trace the accused.

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