

Vested interests want to stop Amarnath yatra: Advani

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader L.K. Advani Monday said that some people, including some in the Jammu and Kashmir government, did not want the pilgrimage to the Hindu shrine of Amarnath to continue and were spreading canards with this aim.

'There are some people in Kashmir who are making all attempts to stop the Amarnath Yatra. Some of these people are in the government,' Advani said. He visited the shrine June 20.

The Amarnath shrine attracts thousands of devotees every year.

'I was told that there was a stampede and nine people had been killed. But when I enquired during my visit, I found that those who had died were people above 60 years and had died due to heart attack,' he said.

Advani said the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government had developed the Vaishno Devi shrine in Jammu and also worked on developing the Amarnath pilgrimage in a similar manner.

'But some people say why should thousands of people visit the shrine? They are saying that this leads to pollution and dirt in the area,' he said.

A section of the state government - led by the Peoples' Democratic Party - has opposed the grant of forest land adjoining the Amarnath shrine to the temple trust. 'The BJP will not compromise on this issue,' Advani said.

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