

## Record 525,000 pilgrims visited Amarnath this year

A total of 529,697 pilgrims visited the cave shrine of Amarnath in Jammu and Kashmir this year, which is a record for last 20 years, the home ministry said Wednesday.

"This is a record at least for the last 20 years, for which figures are available. The previous highest figure for pilgrims in a single year to Amarnath was 400,000 in 2004," the ministry said in a statement.

The pilgrimage to the shrine dedicated to Lord Shiva, conducted from June 18 to Aug 16, coincided with violent protests first in the Kashmir Valley and then in Jammu region over transfer of 40 hectares of land to the shrine management.

"This year's yatra was conducted in spite of the ongoing agitation in Kashmir as well as in Jammu. The yatra was not disturbed at any time in any way and there were no major reports of yatris being inconvenienced," it added.

The yatris were provided all facilities this year that they had been receiving in the previous years.

"The state government and the Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board (SASB) together with the efforts of the people of the Kashmir Valley provided all necessary facilities and made efforts for the yatra to be conducted peacefully," it reads.

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